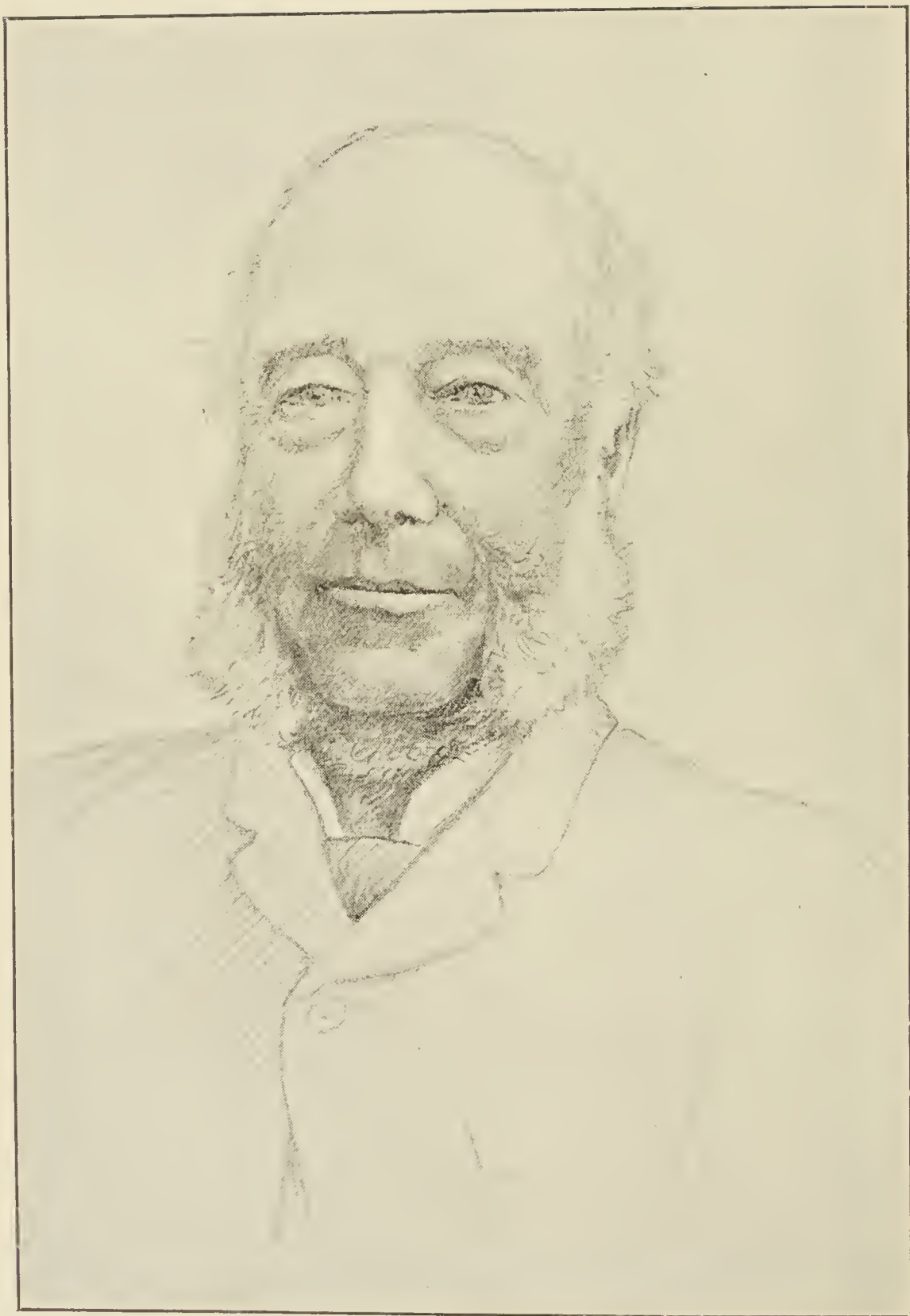


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Mr. Bland - Garbure

POOR LAW CONFERENCES

HELD IN THE YEAR

1897-98.

Proceedings of the Central and District Poor Law Conferences,
held from February 1897 to March 1898, with the
Papers read and Discussion thereon, and
Report of the Central Committee.

LONDON :

P. S. KING & SON,

12 & 14 KING STREET, WESTMINSTER,

1898.

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Thomas Bland Garland.

THOMAS BLAND GARLAND was born on 22nd January 1819, in Newfoundland, his father, James Pointer Garland, being then in charge of one of the mercantile houses there owned by members of the family, under the firm of George Garland & Co., and his mother, Arabella Bland, being daughter of John Bland, at that time High Sheriff of the island.

He was educated at a private school in Dorsetshire, but at an early age entered the counting-house of an uncle, John Watts Garland, in Lisbon, in which, however, he remained only a short time. After a brief period of employment in another house, in Gibraltar, he found his way out to New South Wales, where he tried farming on his own account. The venture was not a success, trade being very bad; but the experience was no doubt of value. He seems already to have shown power of influencing others, for he was able, without punishments, to control and keep steadily at work those convicts whom it was then customary to allot to employers of labour. Circumstances were, however, too strong for him, and in about 1842, after a couple of years of struggle, he found himself at Sydney without a penny in his pocket, and wondering how to carry out his purpose of returning to England and making a fresh start.

At this juncture he was offered a free passage home in a fine ship, the "General Hewitt," commanded by Captain Hart, late of the Hon. East India

Company's service, an old friend of the family. Most men in his position would have jumped at the offer, but young Garland declined to go unless he were allowed to work his passage home. He was accordingly shipped before the mast, and made himself during the voyage so first rate a seaman that before the ship arrived in England he was rated second or third mate, a remarkable feat for a young landsman of only about twenty-three.

After spending some time in this country, looking about for employment, without success, he sailed in 1845 for Chil , to join the commercial house of Myers, Bland, & Co., at Valparaiso, in which his uncle, Horatio Bland (the first introducer of guano into Europe, and himself an adventurous man), was a partner. Upon the ship touching at the Canary Islands he managed to obtain a strange job, for he got himself put in charge of a cargo of camels which had been ordered by the Bolivian Government and were on their way round the Horn. The fact that he possessed no special knowledge of the animal did not prevent him from condemning the existing fittings of the vessel, and devising and superintending her rearrangement for the purpose; and he duly landed his cargo in Bolivia in splendid condition, without a single death, and indeed with one animal over, which had been born at sea.

On arriving at Valparaiso he was disappointed to find that there was no vacancy for him in his uncle's office. He occupied himself, therefore, in working for a broker, until, after some months, he was informed in 1846 by one of the partners in his uncle's firm that there were three posts vacant in the office, of which he might have his choice. To this he characteristically replied that he would take them all, and he did. This entailed very hard work indeed, and for the next two years he seldom left the office before midnight. During this time he displayed such an aptitude for

business, that he soon became one of the managers of the house, and remained in it, to the great satisfaction of all concerned, until the end of 1853. The transactions of the firm were conducted in connection with W. J. Myers & Co., in Liverpool, who exported Manchester goods in return for the guano, copper, &c., imported from Chil ; and this business was extended by him in every possible way. He was also successful about this time, 1847, in establishing, on the coast of Bolivia, the first apparatus for the distillation of sea-water on a large scale, an example which was soon followed in other towns on that coast and in the northern nitrate ports of the coast of Peru. His connection with Myers, Bland, & Co. terminated in 1853, when he left them, for reasons of his own, just as he was on the point of becoming a partner.

He had some little time previously been interested in the first attempt made to work the coal deposits of Chil , and upon leaving his uncle's firm he went into partnership with Don Matias Cousino, a wealthy Chilean gentleman who owned large estates and rich silver mines. With him he had full scope for his abilities, and for some years carried on a flourishing business, which included the opening up of the Lota Coal Mines, through a company of which he was part owner and managing director. These mines were the first of any extent that were worked in Chil , and they became and to this day remain a most valuable property. After a few years of very satisfactory work, the circumstances of the Cousino family necessitated the winding up of the business, and he found himself again free.

By this time he had acquired considerable knowledge of railway engineering, owing to his partner having been a director of the railway then in course of construction between Valparaiso and Santiago, almost the first line in Chil . The class of work interested him, and thenceforward he devoted him-

self almost exclusively to it.* In 1860 he originated and became managing director of the Coquimbo Railway, a line of 5 feet 6 inch gauge, about forty miles long, running into the interior; and later on he undertook, as contractor, the extension of the line across the Cardas to Ovalle. He projected and constructed the Valparaiso Urban Railway (Tramway), assuming the duties of managing director, and himself holding one-ninth of the capital of the company. He took an active part in the provision of a supply of water for the city of Valparaiso. In January 1865 he was entrusted by the Chilian Government with the construction, as contractor, of the San Fernando and Curico Railway, about thirty-two miles long, in Southern Chil , a work which was successfully accomplished. In 1868, at the request of the Governor of Santiago, he carried through the erection of an iron produce market for the city. In these various ways he was kept actively employed during the remainder of his stay in Chil , where he acquired much influence, and was often consulted by the Government in financial and other matters. He was, for instance, instrumental in establishing the Bank of Valparaiso. Had he chosen to remain in the country he might have become a very rich man, as the ball was at his feet, and he had gained the confidence and respect of all around him. But he did not care about money, and as time went on became more and more desirous of retiring to England and enjoying some leisure after so many years of hard work.

Not that his time had been altogether occupied with business. He was a keen sportsman, and always managed, however busy, to indulge his tastes in that direction. His passion for fox-hunting was so great

* In March 1868 he was elected an Associate of the Institution of Civil Engineers, from whose Minutes of Proceedings (vol. cix., sess. 1891-2, part iii.) much of this information as to engineering matters is derived.

that it led him to establish a pack of hounds in Chil , which continued to flourish after his departure. He was an excellent all-round cricketer, wicket-keeping and batting being his strong points. He was a remarkably good pedestrian, and in his early days once walked twelve miles, for a wager, within two hours, over sandy ground between Gibraltar and San Roque. In fact, he was a fine specimen of manhood in every way. His powers of endurance as a horseman were perhaps especially noticeable. On one occasion, when he was in a hurry to return from a business trip to Southern Chil , he rode five hundred miles in five days. Another day he started with the hounds (which at that time he hunted himself) at daylight, rode twelve miles to cover, had a good run of over one-and-a-half hours, and killed his fox. He then started on a fresh horse and rode over eighty miles to Santiago, changing horses twice, and arriving in time for a seven o'clock dinner. As his brother, Mr John Watts Garland, remarks, to whom I am indebted for these interesting details and for most of the above information, "these performances were more than fairly good for a man who at that time rode nearly eighteen stone."

On his departure from Valparaiso in May 1868, after a residence of over twenty years in Chil , his numerous friends invited him to a banquet and presented him with the portraits, painted by E. U. Eddis, of himself and his wife, as a mark of their sense of the services rendered by him in the development of the resources of the country, and in the introduction and support of British field sports, and also of their high appreciation of him as a friend and as a leading member of the British community in Chil . This portrait, although it does not resemble the face so familiar in subsequent years at these Conferences, is yet said to have been a good likeness at the time. There is no good photograph or portrait

of him taken later. The frontispiece to this report is from a pencil sketch by the writer, founded on an unsatisfactory photograph.

Upon his return to England he took up his abode at Hillfields, Burghfield, near Reading, a house built by his uncle, Horatio Bland, and resided there for the remainder of his life. As might have been expected, his intention to settle down to a life of leisure soon gave way to his natural energy. He found himself drawn into all kinds of local affairs. The records of the parish and neighbourhood of Burghfield are full of instances of his wholesome activity. This is not the place to enlarge upon his work in connection with the local charities, the schools, the penny bank, the working men's club, the lodge of Oddfellows, the Berks Friendly Society, and the various other institutions into which he infused life and order, nor to dwell upon the elevating influence which he exercised upon individuals, both as a landlord and as a neighbour. Nor is it necessary, in respect of wider fields, to say more, than that he was a regular attendant at the County Bench, and served on the Berks County Council, as an elected member, from the formation of that body, where, moreover, he acted as chairman of the Technical Education Committee.*

His connection, however, with Poor Law administration is too important to be thus passed over. It was the crowning work of his busy and varied life, and he himself unquestionably regarded it as one of the most important.

* It may here be stated that in 1876 he was elected a director, and in 1880 the chairman, of the Bilbao and Cantabrian Railway Company, for opening up the valuable iron ore district of Galdames, near Bilbao. He twice visited the works of the Company, and largely assisted in bringing about its present prosperity and in carrying out the policy, which he firmly advocated for many years, of reducing the capital of the Company out of its profits, as the most effectual provision for the gradual exhaustion of the mines on which the railway depends for its traffic.

At the time of his election on to the Bradfield Board of Guardians, in 1871, that Union was at a low ebb. Its then chairman, Mr T. Stevens, who had been one of the Poor Law Assistant Commissioners, had striven in vain to effect reform. On a population of 15,853 the pauperism had, on 1st January 1871, reached the alarming total of 1,258, of whom no less than 999 were in receipt of outdoor relief. Mr Garland had himself joined the Board, as he afterwards told the writer, with the usual prepossession in favour of that form of relief. But he was not a man to take up any work without thoroughness, and he looked into the matter for himself. Becoming soon convinced of his error, he threw himself into the work with his usual ardour, and seldom missed a meeting; indeed, he must have travelled over twelve thousand miles between his house and Bradfield, from first to last. After ten years of service under Mr Stevens, he succeeded him, in May 1881, as chairman, a post which he held till his death in 1892. During these twenty-one years the administrative reforms, which even those who entertain different opinions agree in regarding as most remarkable, were carried through; and on 1st January 1892 the pauperism of the Union, with a population of 18,017, had sunk to 136, of whom only 26 were outdoor paupers. The saving, however, to the ratepayers, enormous as it was, he always regarded as the least of the advantages which had followed the change of policy. He was never tired of insisting that the working classes were those who were chiefly benefited by the removal of the curse of pauperism, which he regarded as one of the greatest sources of demoralisation of character. The thoroughness of his work in this direction is best proved by the fact that the policy of the Board has remained unchanged down to the present day, his colleagues and their successors having loyally done their best to carry on the

administration on the lines laid down by him and Mr Stevens.

In this work he made a great point of the utility of the Poor Law Conferences which are now so firmly established, but which are still sometimes unfavourably criticised. Such critics look rather at the obvious weaknesses inherent in meetings comprising numbers of imperfectly instructed Guardians, than at the advantages flowing from intercourse between persons deeply interested in common subjects. His earnest wish always was to induce people to study the questions of Poor Law administration for themselves, and to associate with others in doing so. He was fond of saying that no man ought to be allowed to offer himself for election as Guardian until he should have passed an examination in the Poor Law Commissioners' Report of 1834, and assuredly he could have done so himself.

He acted as secretary to the South-Eastern Poor Law Conference from 1884 down to his death, and made many friends and acquaintances thereby. His two papers, read at the Central Conferences of 1882 and 1888, on "Outdoor Relief" and "State Relief and other Artificial Obstacles to Thrift," are not yet forgotten. The clear straightforward style of them, and of his other utterances on kindred subjects, show the quality of the man, as was the case with everything that he did. He was a clean, fair, hard hitter, and no mistake about it.

It will have been seen from what has been said that he was not a cold-blooded theorist. On the contrary, firm and determined as he was, his nature was of the kindest and most unselfish description. His singularly varied career had furnished him with a knowledge of men and of business which enabled him to wield a strong influence over members of all classes, and his single-hearted disposition commended him to all who came in contact with him.

This is not the place for details, but no account of him would be complete which did not record his deep sense of religion, an element which underlay all his actions. A somewhat fuller estimate of his character will be found in the *Charity Organisation Review*, March 1892.

He died at Hillfields, on 5th February 1892, from complications following a severe attack of influenza, and intensified by persistent attendance at Bradfield when he should have been taking care of himself at home.

He was married in 1847 to his cousin, Sarah Watts Garland, and left no children.

H. G. WILLINK.

HILLFIELDS, *February* 1898.

REPORT

OF THE

DEPUTATION OF CHAIRMEN OF METROPOLITAN BOARDS
OF GUARDIANS AND SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARDS
TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
BOARD, RIGHT HON. H. CHAPLIN, M.P., ON
SATURDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY 1897, IN RELATION
TO THE PROPOSED LONDON CHILDREN'S ASYLUM
DISTRICT.

AN influential deputation of Chairmen of Metropolitan Boards of Guardians and District Schools waited by invitation on the Right Hon. Henry Chaplin, M.P., President of the Local Government Board, on Saturday, 20th February 1897, in his room at Whitehall, to hear from him a statement regarding the recent Order issued by the Department with reference to constituting a new London Children's Asylum District. With the President there were present Mr T. W. Russell, M.P. (Parliamentary Secretary), Sir Hugh Owen (Permanent Secretary), Mr H. C. Munro (the President's Private Secretary), and Captain Lockwood (Local Government Board Inspector).

Mr W. BOUSFIELD (Kensington) headed the deputation, and in introducing it, said: I have been requested, as a Vice-President of the South-Eastern and Metropolitan Poor Law Conferences, to introduce this very important deputation. It is composed of the Chairmen of all the Metropolitan Boards of Guardians, except, I believe, three, and of the Chairmen of the District Schools. We were very pleased to hear that you were willing to receive a deputation, as the question of the proposed Order for a Special Children's District Board has caused a great deal of discussion and interest amongst Metropolitan Guardians. We have taken steps to call a Poor Law Conference on the 26th of this month, and we do not propose to-day to enter into any of the views or arguments which have been taken and used by the various Boards of Guardians. I may mention that, as far as I have been able to discover, the proposed Order has been considered by a very large number of Boards. Of the various Boards of

Guardians, a resolution has been passed by one in favour of the proposed Order as a whole, with the further understanding that the whole of the children should be taken over by the proposed District Board. Nine have passed resolutions in favour of the principle of the Order, but without a new authority being formed. Nine Boards of Guardians have passed resolutions against the Order as a whole, and in six cases the decision has been deferred until after the discussion at the Poor Law Conference. With regard to the Committees of the District Schools, three have passed resolutions entirely against the Order, and three have deferred the question until after the meeting of the Poor Law Conference. I need not say, sir, how much we shall welcome any light which you may be kindly willing to throw upon the views of the Local Government Board with regard to this matter. The question of the care of the children is one of the greatest importance and interest to Guardians. Perhaps, of all their duties, it is the one in which they take the greatest interest—(hear, hear)—and they are now able to bring to bear upon the children the help of ladies in a way which no other authority can do. Boards of Guardians were the first of public bodies in England to make use of the help of ladies, and we feel that in the treatment of the deserving and Poor Law children, it is absolutely essential that the experience and interest and the kindly feelings of ladies should be brought to bear. We do not propose to urge any arguments at the present time, but subsequently, after the meeting of the Poor Law Conference, if any general decision is arrived at, it will be communicated to you. I have to thank you very much for receiving this deputation.

The PRESIDENT said: Mr Bousfield, ladies, and gentlemen, I can assure you that I am very glad of the opportunity of discussing this question of the Order which has been issued by the Local Government Board, and with regard to which I have the pleasure of receiving you to-day. It relates to a matter which, as you very properly say, sir, is not only of great interest and importance to the children as a whole, but also one in which all of you who are present in this room, I know quite well, are very deeply interested. And, indeed, it has been with the object of inviting opinions that this Order has been issued in what I may call its present tentative form. Now, in my opinion, gentlemen, and in this I think that probably all of you who hear me will agree, after the Report of the Committee upon Poor Law Schools, which was published last year, it was inevitable that this question should be dealt with. It was, in my opinion, quite impossible to ignore the recommendations of that Commission; and I own that the choice in dealing with this question appeared to me to lie very much between the recommendations of that Committee on the one hand, and the proposals which were contained in the Order which has been issued by the Local Government Board upon the other. Now, I have elected to deal with this question by Order (that is to say, by the exercise of the powers which are vested in the

Local Government Board under certain Acts of Parliament, which I need not refer to) rather than by legislation, because I was greatly afraid that if, during the session, I had relied upon legislation, the great pressure of business which is now before Parliament might have prevented me from having the opportunity of dealing with the question this session at all. This method of procedure, however, by Order, gentlemen, undoubtedly has its disadvantages. There is no Department, and there is no Minister in charge of any Department, as I am painfully conscious, who can pretend for a moment to be infallible, and no matter how careful or how painstaking he may be, there are almost sure to be some objections in a new proposal of this kind which may have escaped the attention of its authors, but which, at the same time, by the criticisms of those who are well informed upon the subject, may very probably be exposed; and in the absence of Parliamentary criticism, and subject to the condition which I have named, viz., that in some form or other this question inevitably must be dealt with, I should be very glad, indeed delighted, to receive and consider any representations which the trained experience of gentlemen like yourselves can suggest. Now, the great distinction between the recommendation of the Report of that Committee and the Order of the Local Government Board consists in this. The Committee recommend the appointment of a central body to take over the entire control and supervision of all the children who at present are provided for under the Poor Law institutions in the metropolis. The Order, on the other hand, contemplates the appointment of a central body who are to take over the control of certain classes only of those children. Now, with regard to the former, I may say at once, that it seemed to me from the outset to be a very serious proposal, and I was not aware myself of any circumstances which either called for or would have justified me in proposing to transfer the entire charge of all the Poor Law children in the metropolis from the hands of the Guardians to those of some other body. (Hear, hear, and applause.) There are manifest reasons, indeed, which I do not think I need enter into on this occasion—which are well known to every one of you—manifest reasons why there are great advantages of leaving them in the hands of Guardians. Of course, I am perfectly well aware of this, and you may be aware of it also, and I have admitted it frequently, both in the House of Commons and elsewhere, that the great blot upon the present system is the aggregation of vast numbers of children together in what are called “barrack schools.” This is open, as everybody knows, to a great number of objections, which have frequently been pointed out; but this is not a matter, in my judgment at all events, which it is possible to deal with by a stroke of the pen, and indeed I do not quite perceive myself at present, although I am perfectly ready to listen to and consider any representations that may be made to me on the subject—I do not quite perceive, I own, how improvements in this respect are to be brought about more rapidly

under a new body than under the existing bodies situated as they are at present. (Applause.) And even in the case of the barrack schools this may be remembered, in justice to the present body, that they are the creation of a period long antecedent to the present, and when they were undoubtedly a very vast and very great improvement upon the state of things which preceded them. (Hear, hear.) Now, with that question, gentlemen, as far as I can judge from all the information which I have endeavoured to collect upon this subject, as well as from the personal inspection and examination of many of these schools, and of a great deal of the work which has been done, I am aware of nothing which calls for the sweeping changes which are recommended in the Report of that Committee. (Hear, hear, and applause.) On the contrary, if any one will take the trouble to examine and visit for themselves such institutions as the Cottage Homes, for instance, at Banstead, which I have seen myself, or the Girls' School at Sutton, or many other institutions of a similar character, I think, however much opposed they may be to the present system, they will be bound in fairness to admit that a great deal of good and admirable work has been done and is being done at the present time. On the other hand, gentlemen, I have a very distinct and very decided view that with regard to certain classes of children now under the control of the Guardians, arrangements may be made better and more effectively, and more economically, in their interest under one central body than by a number of different bodies, as the case is at present. Now, what we have proposed in the Order, no doubt you are aware of, is this:—We have proposed to transfer the charge of special classes of children from the control of the Guardians to the control of the new central body which we propose to appoint. The classes are as follows:—(1) Children suffering from ophthalmia, or some other contagious disease of the eye; (2) children suffering from contagious disease of the skin and scalp; (3) children requiring other special treatment during convalescence, or the benefit of sea-side air; (4) children who, by reason of defective intellect or physical infirmity, cannot be properly trained in association with children in ordinary schools; and (5) children who are ordered by two justices or a magistrate to be taken under the Industrial Schools Act of 1866 to a workhouse or an asylum of the district. I may also add that it is under the consideration of the Board whether, if the managers of the Metropolitan Asylums Board concur in such an arrangement, the children in the “Exmouth” training ship may not also, with advantage, be transferred to that body. And then we have it in contemplation also that it might be desirable for this central authority to supervise and make rearrangements with regard to the boarding-out of children, although that is a matter which would have to be treated subsequently, because any such addition to our scheme could not be carried out without legislation. Now, let me take ophthalmic children for a moment, and see how it is likely to work in their case. I understand that, roughly speaking, the ophthalmic children are

nearly a thousand in number. Well, now, what do they require? Ophthalmic children require separation and expert treatment, and further than that, while they are separated, and while they are under this expert treatment, their education should still continue. (Hear, hear.) Now, that is a very important point, but it is almost impossible to make all these detailed arrangements on the same effective footing in a number of separate schools without great trouble and without very great expense. Some additional provision of accommodation, and consequently some additional expense, will, of course, in any case be necessary. I may remind this meeting that there is an ophthalmic school at Hanwell. Now, that school at Hanwell accommodates, as far as I remember, somewhere between 300 and 400 children—somewhere over 300, I think it is. Many of the children go to the school at Hanwell, suffering from ophthalmia, from other districts in London, and the authorities do not altogether approve of this arrangement—I understand they are unwilling to go on with it, and pressure is sometimes brought to bear upon the Local Government Board to this effect: they desire that this establishment should be taken over by some other authority. Well, the proposed new authority we contemplate, if that was desired by Hanwell, might take over such an establishment as this. Further additional accommodation, no doubt, would be required, but that will be necessary in any case. Now, I have dealt with the question of ophthalmia, and what I have said with regard to ophthalmic children applies in a greater or a less degree to most of the other classes of children whom we propose to transfer to the new authority. One advantage of this scheme would be this: it would liberate at once a great deal of the accommodation in the existing schools, which I am advised is greatly needed, which would be required in any circumstances, if it was not provided by this means. There are some other classes of children to whom, perhaps, I might refer. These are the children of defective intellect. Well, the London School Board have lately been engaged in providing for the education of children of this class. I understand that there are some thirty of these centres of education provided by the London School Board. What we contemplate is this—that it would not be very difficult for an arrangement to be made by the new authority to provide homes for these children of defective intellect in the immediate neighbourhood of one of these schools, where they could acquire, without further expense, the provision for education which has been recently made by the London School Board. Then there is the question of “remand” children. The remand children, it is held by those who are rather competent authorities, may, or even will, be bad associates to the other children with whom they are brought into contact. Classification of the children in such circumstances would be highly desirable, but classification would be impossible in a workhouse where they are detained at present, and I think it might easily be accomplished under the arrangements that we propose. Well now, gentlemen, coming to some

of the objections which have been raised to these proposals, or to some which I think might possibly be raised, and these are points on which I am rather the more anxious to hear from you, and on which you can give me probably fuller information than I otherwise can acquire. One objection I have seen stated is that it will add greatly and unnecessarily to the expense already incurred in the care of pauper children; but, as far as my opinion goes, I should be obliged to differ entirely from that view. We believe that the provision which is necessary must be made sooner or later, for the children of these classes can be more economically trained in the hands of one central authority than they can be in the hands of a number of different authorities. That is one of the reasons why we have made this proposal. Well, then, it has been urged upon me—and this is a subject which I have carefully considered, and on which I should be glad to hear other opinions—it has been frequently urged upon me that if there were a central authority of this kind created, that there is one which we might have made use of, one to our hands, viz., in the Metropolitan Asylums Board. Well, I should like that question to be very carefully considered, and I will give you the reasons why we thought that it was not the most desirable arrangement. In the first place, you will remember, it was entirely opposed to the recommendations of the Report of that Committee. They specifically stated that whatever authority was created, in their judgment and opinion it ought not to be the Metropolitan Asylums Board. (Hear, hear.) But there are other much more important reasons, in my judgment, against it than that, and I have examined into this question with some care. In the first place, the Metropolitan Asylums Board have a number of other very important and very pressing duties already to attend to, and I doubt whether it would be within their power or their competence to do justice to this new and heavy obligation which would be imposed upon them if we made them the central authority. In the first place, they have the charge of imbeciles, amounting, at the present moment, to about 6,000. They have also to make arrangements for smallpox and for fever, and they have, at the present moment, 4,800 patients. Then they have to provide for epidemics, which may occur at any time, and with a sudden outbreak a very great accession of labour and of work is thrown upon them in addition to their other onerous duties. When there is at any time an outbreak of cholera, they have always been looked at as the first line of defence which is to compete with a great national calamity of that kind, supposing we were unfortunate enough to be placed in that position. Well, these amount altogether, I think, to very serious and very onerous duties, which are placed upon the Metropolitan Asylums Board already, and I question very much indeed, if we desire to see the work we have at heart effectively and properly carried out in the future, whether it would be wise to select the Metropolitan Asylums Board as the authority for the purpose. (Hear, hear.) I am not aware of other objections which I can deal with at the present

moment, but I should be glad to hear from others what the objections are. Whatever they are, and whatever they may be, you may be sure they will be carefully and respectfully considered by this Department. There are some other advantages in this Order to which, I think, I may call attention. The Local Government Board have the power to nominate certain members—certain members other than those who are to be elected by Guardians. I think that that is desirable, because there may be always people thoroughly competent to deal with questions of this kind who have taken a great interest in the subject, some of whom it might be desirable to appoint to places on this authority among its members—people who, perhaps, might be useful in giving advice and consideration to such questions as the boarding-out and management of that kind. Boarding-out, I think, I mentioned to you at the commencement of my observations, but if I did not, I should desire to do so, seeing that we contemplate the possibility of dealing with the question, and throwing the responsibility of dealing with it upon the new central authority also; but that is a matter for which legislation would be required, and therefore I cannot speak as confidently upon that point as I can in regard to matters which depend entirely upon the Order of this Board. Well now, gentlemen, I have endeavoured to put before you, not, I hope, at too great length, but as clearly and as concisely as I can, what are the general objects and purposes we have in view in the issuing of this Order, and what I ask you to remember is this, that in the opinion of the Local Government Board, and in the opinion of Her Majesty's Government, this is a question which must be dealt with. It cannot be left in its present position, after the recommendations of the Report of the Committee. I have submitted to you various modes by which, I think, it may be dealt with, and I shall be extremely anxious to hear from you, and those whom you represent, after you have had your Conference, and after you have taken all these matters into consideration, whether you view them upon the whole—the proposals of the Local Government Board—as more desirable or not than the recommendations of the Committee which reported upon this subject after such prolonged investigation during last year. (Applause.)

Mr BOUSFIELD thanked the President, on behalf of the deputation, for so clearly placing his views before them, and especially for having so kindly received the deputation. Some members of the deputation desired to ask a few questions of the President, and if possible receive an answer to them.

Dr MASSEY (South Metropolitan Schools) asked how cases of children who had been suffering from disease would be dealt with, should there be a recurrence of the complaint. Would they be detained at their own infirmary, or sent back to the central asylum?

Mr E. L. BRANDRETH (Kensington and Chelsea District Schools) asked whether medical opinion was sufficiently decided in regard to feeble-minded children to justify their entire separation from the

rest of the children, and whether such a scheme as that which had been proposed by the Kensington and Chelsea School District, to give separate teaching to those children in their own schools, and to allow them practically to mix with the other children, would not be a preferable arrangement, until medical opinion was more completely formed.

Mr J. G. WAINWRIGHT (North Surrey Schools) asked under whose authority the children would be removed from the workhouse or school. Would it be upon the application of the managers themselves, or upon that of a special officer appointed by the Local Government Board to examine into the various cases and select them from the workhouse or school?

Mr J. ELLIOT (Islington) asked what was proposed to be done with the Darenth Schools if the new board was formed.

Mrs EVANS (Strand) inquired whether the Guardians or the central board would have any power of detention of children who might be admitted to be suffering from infectious disease. The great difficulty of the Guardians was the in and out question, that was to say, children who were brought to the Guardians by their parents. The law, as it was at present, was that a parent could not get his or her discharge from the workhouse without taking their children. They were, therefore, under this difficulty, that when the children were half cured they could be demanded and taken away into the different lodging-houses. It seemed to her a point of very great importance whether some power to detain these children should not be vested in the Guardians or the new authority.

Mr BROWN (Whitechapel) asked whether the Local Government Board could see their way to asking the opinion of the Metropolitan Asylums Board on the statement the President had made that morning, especially with regard to the question of their ability to take up the work. He felt very strongly that their opinion should be asked upon the subject. He had no doubt they would feel that if such a work was to be done by them they would require to be strengthened in some way or another. (Hear, hear.)

The PRESIDENT, in reply to Dr Massey's question, said that undoubtedly if there was a recurrence of any of the diseases that had been mentioned with the cases of the children, they would go back into the category in which they were originally placed, and would have to go back again to the central authority. He apprehended that if the central authority performed its duty they would take care of the children until there was every reason to suppose that they were cured. With regard to children of defective intellect, he considered that they would be removed to the central authority. It was asked whether these children might not be better treated by being mixed with other children while receiving their education. That was so. What the Board contemplated was that they would have special education under a central authority, and they would have the advantage—he believed it was considered by experts to be an advantage—

in certain cases of mixing with other children. The next question asked was under what authority the children would be sent to the central authority? He assumed it would be done under a certificate of the medical officer. The schools of the Metropolitan Asylums Board at Darenth stood in a different category altogether. Imbecile children were removed to Darenth under a certificate of a medical officer as being imbecile. There was a great distinction between imbecile children and children of defective intellect only. Mrs Evans had asked a question with regard to the ins and outs. That was the matter the Local Government Board were carefully considering, and hoped to deal with separately. There were a great many difficulties in transferring children known as ins and outs to the central authority, and that was a matter which they were now considering, and they would have to deal with it at a different time.

Mr BOUSFIELD thanked the President for having received the deputation, which then withdrew.

REPORT

OF THE

SPECIAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE FOR THE SOUTH-EASTERN AND METROPOLITAN DISTRICTS ON THE PROPOSED LONDON CHILDREN'S ASYLUM DISTRICT, HELD IN THE BOARD ROOM OF THE CITY OF LONDON UNION, 61 BARTHOLOMEW CLOSE, E.C., ON FRIDAY, 26TH FEBRUARY 1897.

The following are the names of the Delegates who were appointed by the Metropolitan Boards of Guardians and School District Boards to attend the Conference.

The names of those who wrote down their names as attending the Conference are marked with an asterisk (*).

W. BOUSFIELD, ESQ., J.P. IN THE CHAIR.

DELEGATES FROM BOARDS OF GUARDIANS.

Bethnal Green—Mr E. Thurgood,* Mr W. J. Webster, Rev. W. Harvey-Smith.

Camberwell—Mr J. T. Helby,* Mr D. G. Simpson, and Mrs Brown-Sinclair.*

Chelsea—Mr Douglas Gordon,* Mr Blore,* and Mr Brass.*

Fulham—Mr A. Dell,* Mr P. Lawson, Mr C. Pascall.

Greenwich—Mr E. Smith,* Mr W. F. Batley,* Rev. Brooke Lambert,* and Mr Saw (Clerk).*

Hackney—Mr E. Chubb,* Mr J. F. Jones,* Mr G. J. Stoon, and Mr F. R. Coles (Clerk).*

Hampstead—Mr J. S. Fletcher,* Mr J. King,* Mrs Pearsall, and Mr Westbury-Preston (Clerk).

Holborn—Miss J. M. Baker,* Mr E. Howes,* Mr J. Gibson.

Islington—Mr E. Tomkins,* Mr J. Kelly, Mr S. Lambert.

Kensington—Mrs Warner,* Mr Franklin,* and Colonel Webb.*

Lambeth—Mrs Dunn Gardner,* Rev. W. Hobbs, and Mr Cochran.*

Lewisham—Mr J. T. Brunning,* Mr Haggett,* Mr J. D. Kemp, and Rev. Dr Marshall.

London—Mr Evans,* Mr Lile,* Mr Willmott,* Mr Laurie,* Mr W. Mann-Cross, Mr Day,* and Rev. E. C. Hawkins.*

Mile End—Mr J. Brown,* Mr H. Lawrence, Mr O. W. Peacock.

Paddington—Rev. W. Dunckley,* Mr C. W. Empson,* Mrs Mylne,* and Mr Aveling (Clerk).*

Poplar—Rev. M. Hare, Mr C. S. Poole, and Mr W. Crooks.*

St George in the East—Mr P. M. Martineau,* Miss Cowie,* Mr Cartwright, and Mr Browne (Clerk).*

St George's—Mrs Lawrie,* Hon. A. Talbot,* Mr J. Toller.

St Giles—Mr J. Haxell.*

St Marylebone—Miss M'Kee,* Miss Webb,* Mr G. Maddox.*

St Olave's—Mr Collins,* Mr Ecroyd,* Rev. J. S. Lidgett, and Mr Fenton (Clerk).

St Pancras—Miss Lidgett,* Mr W. F. Hobrow,* Mr F. Purchase,* and Mr Millward (Clerk).*

St Saviour's—Miss Johnson,* Rev. E. T. Hamel,* Mr I. Cornell.

Shoreditch—Mr Alabaster,* Mr Cox, Rev. H. P. Kelly,* and Mr Clay (Clerk).*

Stepney—Mr Bolton Smart, Mr F. C. Mills, Rev. F. H. Higley,* and Mr Lewis (Clerk).

Strand—Mr T. Hill, Mrs Evans,* Miss Painton,* and Mr Maddocks (Clerk).*

Wandsworth and Clapham—Mrs Gray, Mr D. Milligan,* Mr W. S. Penfold.*

Westminster—

Whitechapel—Mr J. Brown,* Rev. Canon Barnett,* Mr J. Harris,* and Mr Vallance (Clerk).*

Woolwich—Colonel Graham, Mr Squires,* Dr Lindon.*

DELEGATES FROM SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARDS.

Central London—Mr Williams,* Mr Cooksey, Mr Lile,* and Mr East (Clerk).

Forest Gate—Mr H. J. Cook,* Mr W. Crooks,* and Rev. E. A. B. Sanders.

Kensington and Chelsea—Mr Edgcombe,* Mr Franklin, and Mrs Warner.*

North Surrey—Mr Wainwright,* Mr Brooks,* Mrs Staines,* and Mr Chaldecott (Clerk).*

South Metropolitan—Dr Massey,* Mr Dannatt,* Mr Maud.*

West London—Miss Inderwick * and Mr Foss.

The following Guardians (not specially delegated) were also present :—

Mr W. A. Bailward—*Bethnal Green*.

Mr C. Dunn—*Hackney*.

Mr Benecke, Mrs Finlay—*Hampstead*.

Mr Howlett—*Lambeth*.

Mr W. Brown—*Lewisham*.

Mr J. G. White—*City of London*.

Mr Dawson—*Woolwich*.

South-Eastern and Metropolitan Districts.

SPECIAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE

ON THE PROPOSED

“LONDON CHILDREN’S ASYLUM DISTRICT,”

26th FEBRUARY 1897.

AT eleven o’clock precisely the chair was taken by Mr LILE (City of London), who said: Ladies and gentlemen, as representative of the City of London Board I welcome you here this morning. The question which we are met to consider and discuss is a very important one, and I merely have to introduce to you the chairman of the day, Mr BOUSFIELD, whom I now place in possession of the meeting.

Mr WILLIAM BOUSFIELD then took the chair, and said: I am obliged to the City of London Board of Guardians for so kindly lending us this hall to-day. I should like to say a few words before this discussion commences, because I think that as a Poor Law Conference we are met to-day under an unusual sense of responsibility. Some of those who are present went to the Local Government Board last Saturday to hear from Mr Chaplin the views of the Local Government Board as to the question we have to deal with, and we received from him a request that we would, after our consultation to-day, send to the Local Government Board the views which were expressed by the London Guardians. The matter is a very complicated one. We know, in the first instance, that the Departmental Committee dealing with pauper children made a distinct recommendation that pauper children should be taken away from the control, either immediate or indirect, of the Guardians and of the Local Government Board, and should be handed over to a new body working under the Education Department. I think I may assume that after the crowded meeting of the Central Poor Law Conference which was held last year, that that view, which was embodied in the Education Bill, was not generally accepted by the Guardians. We wish to keep control of the Poor Law children, and we also wish, I presume, to deal with them in the best possible way. Now, we come to the Order of the Local Government Board, or the proposed Order which is now under our consideration. In that Order, under the first article, the Unions, London Unions and

Parishes, would, if this Order were carried out, hand over to a representative body appointed by themselves these cases — (1) Children suffering from ophthalmia, or some other contagious disease of the eye; (2) children suffering from contagious disease of the skin and scalp; (3) children requiring other special treatment during convalescence, or the benefit of seaside air; (4) children who, by reason of defective intellect or physical infirmity, cannot be properly trained in association with children in ordinary schools; and (5) children who are ordered by two justices or a magistrate to be taken under the Industrial Schools Act of 1866 to a workhouse or an asylum of the district. Now, that is only dealing with a certain number of special cases of children at present under the control of the Guardians. It is proposed that these should be handed over to a Board formed in this way. The Board of Guardians in the London Unions or Parishes “shall on one of the last two ordinary meetings in March, and subsequently in every year aforesaid, proceed in the manner prescribed to elect members for the Union or Parish to serve for the ensuing year.” That body would be a Poor Law body consisting of representative Guardians, together with nominees by the Local Government Board, or of persons who were interested in the matter. Now, this question has been much considered outside, and we have the opinions of other bodies whose interests are diverse from that of the Guardians, and whose views do not coincide with those of the Guardians as to the matter. In the first place, an Association has been formed called the “State Children’s Aid Association.” The object of that Association is to carry into effect the recommendations of the Departmental Committee, under which the children—Poor Law children—should be taken away from the control of the Guardians, directly or indirectly, and handed over to the Education Department. I should like to point out that those recommendations are distinctly opposed to the proposals of the Local Government Board Order. The Association considers that the disadvantages of the proposed Children’s Asylum Board outnumber the beneficial advantages. All interested in the well-being of State-supported children are therefore advised to use such influence as they possess to oppose the Draft Order becoming a permanent one, and every effort is to be made to induce the Government to create a strong and responsible Central Metropolitan Board which should be endowed with the possession of buildings, appliances, and staff, to enable the classifying of the children, the sale of some of the buildings, and the use of others for the purpose of meeting the changed conditions of life. On the other hand, also, a Committee of the County Council has been considering this matter, and they have also come to an adverse opinion upon the proposals of the Local Government Board. What is the reason that they have come to that opinion? I quote from the opinion of their solicitor, which was given to the Council, these words: “I venture to suggest that the proper bodies to whom to refer

the making of arrangements for children under remand previously to committal to industrial schools are the local authorities with regard to industrial schools, whether these be as now the School Board and the Council, or whether, as proposed by the Council in June 1894, the School Board alone be the authority." The same principle runs through it with regard to the other classes of children which are dealt with. There is no doubt that the views—certainly of this Committee of the County Council—go to this effect, that this Order is inadvisable, inasmuch as it would prevent or delay School Board children being handed over to the control of a central authority, that authority being either the County Council, or themselves, or the School Board. Well, then, we have these two bodies who are against the continued control by the Guardians of these children, opposing the promulgation of this Order. I think we have, therefore, a very responsible and important task to-day, because if the Guardians of London refuse to accept this Order, if they tell the Local Government Board that they do not approve of it, that they are anxious to keep their children as they are at present under their own control, then I believe that the first step has been taken in removing the Poor Law children entirely from the control of the Guardians. The Government have taken a very important and responsible step. Mr Chaplin told us the other day that they had determined to put aside the recommendations of the Departmental Committee that there should be a central authority dealing with School Board children, and working under the Education Department. That is a very strong step for Mr Chaplin and for the Government to take, more especially as we know that there are members of the Government who were responsible for the Education Bill of last year, and who are most anxious that the full recommendation of the Departmental Committee should be carried into effect. Well, ladies and gentlemen, I hope that we shall discuss this matter fully and carefully, and with a due sense of responsibility. Personally, any decision which would force the Local Government Board to come to reconsider the whole matter, and perhaps to consent to the care of Poor Law children being taken away, would, in my opinion, be a very serious mistake. We are anxious to have the control of these children, not for the purpose of patronage, or because we object to duties being taken out of our hands, but because we believe from our experience we are the very best persons for looking after the interests of these Poor Law children. That being so, we are bound to look at the matter all round, not merely from the isolated view of our own school, and I hope that in the discussion to-day no Guardians will simply praise the methods at work in their own schools. We have to deal with a wider question; we have to deal, first, with the question whether we will consent that these children be separated for the purpose of separate education; and secondly, we have to deal with the question (if that is done) to what body ought they to be handed over; and in these two branches of

the discussion I hope that we shall not go into small *minutiæ* with regard to individual schools, but that we shall deal with the question as to what are the interests of the children, and what are the interests of the Guardians. The Conference to-day is important, as is shown by the fact that every Board of Guardians and every Committee of District Schools has sent representatives. (Applause.)

Mr WM. CROOKS, L.C.C. (Poplar)—May I ask, sir, as a matter of procedure, how you propose to go on—whether resolutions are to be submitted for consideration?

The CHAIRMAN—I presume that resolutions will be moved and spoken to, but it is desirable that we should continue to adopt the procedure of Poor Law Conferences, viz., that every speaker should kindly send up his name to me with any resolution; and secondly, that it should be in the control of the chairman to limit the time to five minutes for each speaker, unless there is a very clearly expressed view on the part of the Conference that the speaker should be allowed to go on. In putting any resolution, and in coming to any decision, I think we had better bear in mind the two heads of the discussion which are mentioned upon the notice summoning this meeting—firstly, in relation to the principle of separate provision for the several classes named in the Order; and secondly, the expediency or otherwise of constituting an entirely new representative Board for the purpose. I shall now call upon Mr Wainwright to open the discussion.

Mr J. G. WAINWRIGHT (Chairman, North Surrey District Schools)—I must preface my remarks to-day by expressing feelings of inability to do justice to this so large and important question, but at the same time, when your indefatigable Honorary Secretary asked me to open this discussion, I felt it a matter of duty to accept the invitation, considering my long and intimate acquaintance with every detail of District School difficulties and responsibilities. Twenty years is no inconsiderable period of a man's life to be spent in endeavouring to cope with the questions constantly presenting themselves for solution in such a large and important matter as is committed to District School Managers. I have therefore thrown together some thoughts which I hope may at all events start a useful discussion. On Saturday last the President of the Local Government Board received a deputation of the several chairmen of the Poor Law Unions in London, and laid before us his and the Local Government Board's views upon the situation, and the Draft Order. The remarks then made changed the current of my thoughts. The impression left on my mind was, that however willing the President might be to receive suggestions—and he was most courteous in the treatment of the subject—still it was quite evident that some such Order would be enforced. It must, however, have been very satisfactory to all then present to hear the President express his opinion respecting the Poor Law School Inquiry Report. He said he failed to see how improvements were to be brought about more rapidly under a new body than

under the existing authorities constituted as at present, and further that he was aware of nothing which called for the sweeping changes recommended in that Report. The powers conferred upon such School Boards may possibly in 1849, when the Act was passed, have been thought sufficient, but the world does not stand still, and every department of public life experiences the same thing. There comes a time when these powers need remodelling or extending. I am quite prepared, notwithstanding the Report of the Poor Law School Inquiry, to defend the District School system. (Applause.) There are doubtless varying ways in which that system has been carried out, some more successful than others; but for this Commission to have made the sweeping charges contained in its Report is, to my mind, most unjust to that large number of men and women who have devoted so large a part of their time to the successful discharge of these responsible duties. (Hear, hear.) It is also disappointing to find those who are supposed to be making an almost judicial inquiry acting as if they were barristers for a prosecution. As I have said before, I have held my position of chairman of one of these District Schools for twenty years, and I boldly challenge any other system to show better results or even equal results to those we can show. I feel constrained to say a word or two upon the criticisms which have been heaped upon the Local Government Board. During my twenty years' work I have had constant dealings with the Local Government Board and its Inspectors, and I have ever found one and all take pleasure in thoroughly considering and sympathetically helping any well considered scheme for improving the schools, and I fear I have during these years presented many proposals, distinct departures from recognised precedents; but for all that, from the several Presidents downwards, I have always met with hearty encouragement and most practical help. But it may be said we are not to-day called to deal directly with this Departmental Committee's Report or recommendations, but with an Order which is apparently put forward as an alternative scheme. This Draft Order proposes that a new Board shall be created of a representative character to relieve the Guardians.

1st. As to the treatment of ophthalmia. These unfortunate children, wisely rejected at the educational establishments, are left on the hands of the union infirmary, where there is neither sufficient separate accommodation for them, nor the special skill which this disease really requires to deal with it successfully.

2ndly. Feeble-minded children. Considerable difference of opinion will doubtless exist as to the wisest means of treating this class of child. The subject seems to me to be fraught with almost insurmountable difficulties. "Feeble-minded children" is a very wide term, there are so many degrees of this condition, and my experience has been that a feeble-minded child needs, perhaps more than others, to be associated with strong and healthy-minded companions—(applause)—for if it is relegated to mix solely with children of the same capacity

or lower capacity than itself, it will inevitably deteriorate, which is certainly not the aim of any of those who advocate the creation of these special homes. (Hear, hear.) Then come skin diseases of the hundred and one kinds of which flesh is heir to. This is again a very wide question. I firmly believe that if an examination were made by an expert in ringworm, the general mass of children in our Board and National Schools would come out very badly as compared with these under the care of the Poor Law. (Hear, hear.) The school with which I have the pleasure to be connected is, I believe, absolutely free from ringworm; we have some sixteen cases isolated, and under separate care, teaching, and training, and until they are, in the opinion of our medical man, absolutely free and incapable of transferring the disease to others, there they will remain. In the several unions I doubt not there are numerous cases, and unless these medical officers are almost specialists, I cannot but fear that, unsuspected as it may be, there could be found many cases; for it is one of those conditions of scalp which often escapes the attention of medical men who have not been familiar with its early stages and its many forms. I know that the London School Board have had under consideration the appointment of a specialist to examine the eyes of children in their schools, attention having been called to the large number suffering therewith. Then we have remand cases. These are very few in number, yet to establish separate homes for such a varying and at the same time small class seems very difficult and expensive. Finally, we come to seaside treatment. It has only been during recent years that this form of treatment has extended to our poorer brethren. Many here, like myself, can remember that in our childhood it was but rarely resorted to—now it is all but universal; yet Guardians are left to a few, what are called, Certified Homes, which are from my experience most unsatisfactory. They are run for profit; their powers of separation are most limited; and the result deplorable. One or two schools have Seaside Homes of their own, and speaking for the one attached to my schools, I can only say we are abundantly satisfied with the magnificent results. It is often useless to send a child to the sea for three weeks, which is the usual period which ordinary convalescent homes provide for. The cases which with us have proved the most successful have spent not three weeks, but three years, and sometimes more, there; but the time has not been wasted; they have at last returned thoroughly healthy, when at the time they went there, there seemed even to the medical man but poor hope of ever producing a healthy being. Thus much for the Order itself. Now I would venture to offer a few remarks upon how these objects may in my opinion be obtained with the least expense. When the Act of 1849 was passed, it was clearly intended that the Boards of Management thus created should take charge of *all* the children coming under the control of Guardians; and I venture to think that if this were enforced the several Boards could readily

provide for all these cases, except distinctly feeble-minded and seaside. I would like to have an exhaustive examination into the cases now at Seaside Homes, and I should not be surprised to find many children there who would derive far greater benefit under infirmary care than they are receiving at the seaside. But the several infirmaries are so full that it is convenient to ship off cases to the seaside, where they gain little or no good, but they are provided for. In the meantime they are rapidly deteriorating mentally, physically, and industrially. It might appear to some that just as the Asylums Board has charge of fevers, smallpox, and imbeciles, so it should have charge of all the sick, whether adult or child, and for this purpose should establish—

- (1.) An Ophthalmic Hospital.
- (2.) A Ringworm Hospital.
- (3.) Seaside Homes.

But I fear that in order to secure the full use of these, specially numbers 1 and 2, there would need be authority given to an Inspector constantly to visit the several workhouses and schools, and inspect every child, with power of removal to the hospitals; for amongst ordinary medical men there is doubtless a great lack of knowledge with the early stages, and want of actual experience as to the serious consequences of contagion in these diseases. I have not seen Dr Stephenson's report, but I should be quite prepared to find he has found a condition of things very different from that reported by many of the medical men in charge of these institutions.

To establish a new Board seems to me a very expensive way of dealing with the subject:—

1st. A new Board must have officers of various grades, offices, clerks, and necessary appliances.

2nd. The Board must be composed of representatives.

3rd. The best person for this work would of course be the representative who had the greatest experience in the management of the respective schools.

But the powers of human nature are limited, and whilst a man may be willing to devote his energies for the attainment of the best results in a school in which he is directly interested, he may well hesitate to also form one in a Board of say sixty others, and find sixty different opinions to contend with in deciding upon a course of action. Then again he or she may find by one non-attendance (unavoidable) the scheme which seemed fairly launched was wrecked for the want of his or her personality. We have all of us, I feel sure, experienced this. As a result, the Board would fall into the hands of those who, unattached elsewhere, and possibly without the practical experience needed to wisely guide and administer such a trust, would ultimately cause even more delay and more friction than is now complained of. There is another point in the organisation of such a Board as is proposed which has perhaps escaped attention, viz., that many children suffering with ophthalmia, which are rightly

separated from healthy eyes, are often not so bad as to be unfit for education. There must, therefore, be a school, and a very efficient school; there must also be industrial teaching, or the results would be lamentable—cases of this disease occupying months in their cure. The same must be said of ringworm even to a greater degree than ophthalmia, for in these cases there is usually nothing to interfere with the regular schooling or training, and yet they must be separated. Under all the circumstances, the course which commends itself to my mind is that each School Board shall deal with its own ophthalmic and ringworm cases, whilst Seaside Homes should be established under the care of the Asylums Board. I feel sure that such a course would be attended by the greatest efficiency with the minimum expense. I would suggest that each Board, either district or separate, be called upon to lay before the Local Government Board well-considered plans for carrying out these proposals—that the Local Government Board should appoint some three well-qualified Inspectors to consider them, and by personal interviews with the respective Boards be in a position, without unnecessary delay, to advise the President. There would then be left only the weak-minded, cripple, and remand cases. For the first and second I would say let them fall to the Asylums Board, and let the third be sent to the Truant Schools of the London School Board. I have done my best to lay some thoughts before you, and I shall hope that much good will come of a full discussion. To hand the children over to a separate body would have the effect of those who best know the children losing all interest in them. My views, I believe, are sound, but be that as it may, I feel, as our chairman has told us, in a very responsible position indeed. We are face to face with two alternatives—one destruction, and the other not quite destruction. I feel, therefore, I should hesitate to propose a resolution definitely adopting the course I have suggested, because I believe we had far better accept the present Order rather than that which was suggested by the Departmental Committee. (Applause.)

Mr JAMES BROWN (Chairman, Whitechapel Union)—I have listened very carefully to the opening remarks of our chairman, and with these I very fully agree that we have met to-day on a very important subject, and with a very great deal of responsibility upon us. I have also listened to the speech which has just been made to us, and with a good deal of it; of course, we all agree. I dare say the Guardians, as a whole, in London would be very loth to part altogether with the management or with the contact and oversight of the children belonging to them. In that, to some extent, I agree. I am afraid we have failed in some points, and it is because of that failure that the Departmental Committee's Report received so much the attention and approval in certain quarters that it did. What I feel to-day is we have met with the fact staring us in the face. The Local Government Board, in consequence of that Report, feel, as the President told us on Saturday last, that it is necessary for something

to be done. Sir Hugh Owen told some of us that they had given the most careful and anxious thought to it during many months, and they had come to the conclusion that the Order which they proposed to issue was the only way at the present time out of the difficulty. My own feeling, ladies and gentlemen, is this, that opinion moves on methods. Important necessities that we did not see ten years ago press themselves upon us to-day, and I should like that the Guardians of London took an intelligent view of their responsibility, and were desirous to meet as far as possible the present movement and the present suggestion of the Local Government Board. I for one would give perfect credit to them that they have full desire to do the best they can in dealing with this important subject, and I feel for one that the step which they have now taken is right in some measure. I think the idea to establish a central authority is good. It seems to me impossible that each Board of Guardians can deal with the diseases that afflict our children economically and well, and so completely as they can be dealt with under a central authority, where the best medical help and foresight can be given; and I venture to think, after all, it is cheaper and more economical for Guardians to allow some central board—we won't say at this moment what that board may be—but some central institution should be established to deal with the class of children which are the most difficult to manage. Therefore, I for one, and I speak here to-day as the mouthpiece of my own Board—at Whitechapel we were perfectly unanimous, and the resolutions which we passed, and which we distributed far and wide, will in some measure commend the ideas which we there set forth—we, as a Board, distinctly feel that the move of the Local Government Board is right up to certain points. It will be better in every sense that there should be some central authority to take over these children who can be dealt with better in every way, and we hope and trust restored to health, and be able so much better to fight the battle of life which lies before them. So far as that is concerned I would be prepared to move this morning a resolution on this point. I want the voice of the Guardians to support the Local Government Board in their movement so far as they can approve of it; and I am bound to say that the Report, which was given at the preliminary meeting before we went into the President's room last Saturday, points distinctly to the fact that many Boards of Guardians are of opinion that a central authority would be wise and right. That being so, can we not to-day all unite and send up recommendations to the Local Government Board which would help to guide their hands, and bring about a state of things which we could all fairly, well, and unanimously approve? I feel this, that it is our best course to-day to support the Local Government Board as far as we can. We have come, practically, to the parting of the ways. Let us see that the road which will be taken in days to come shall be the road which commends itself best to our judgment. I know perfectly well that there are some Boards of Guardians who have dealt with this

question very properly and very well—they are on the right track—those who established these schools at Hanwell. We know it was one of the best steps taken in connection with schools, and many of us have only been too glad to send the children whom we could not fairly and properly deal with to these institutions for the help and support they are able to give. We have drawn up somewhat carefully a resolution if the chairman would admit it, and the only difficulty, I feel, is this, as to whether it should be divided into two parts or be taken as a whole. With your permission I will read it:—

“That, in the opinion of this Conference, it is desirable that separate provision, such as is indicated in the Draft Order, should be made for special classes of children.”

“That, to my mind, means one-half only.

The CHAIRMAN—I think it would be desirable to deal with that part first. Undoubtedly we shall have to vote upon different possible views, and I think the motion read by Mr Brown should be taken in the first instance. He, however, might read the second part in order that we may judge. I would suggest also that we should take the whole of the discussion at once upon the two parts, but that when it comes to put the resolutions they should be put separately. In that way, I think, we shall obtain the opinion of the Conference generally.

Mr JAMES BROWN—The first clause refers to the general principle. I shall now read to you the second part, which refers to that part of the Order of the Local Government Board in which we certainly do not concur:—

“That, in the opinion of this Conference, it is unnecessary and inexpedient to constitute an entirely new authority for the reasons—(1) That an authority with work largely akin to that contemplated in the Order already exists for the entire metropolis; (2) that the constitution of a new authority similar to the Metropolitan Asylums Board will have the effect of consolidating methods which will hereafter call for amendment; (3) that it will involve the metropolis in a large expense incident to the establishment of a new authority.

“For these reasons this Conference submits to the Local Government Board the expediency of placing the work tentatively, at all events, in the hands of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, strengthened for the purpose in any way which the Local Government Board may consider desirable.”

With your permission, sir, may I speak on the second part?

The CHAIRMAN—Perhaps we should see how the discussion proceeds. You would be able to speak in reply.

Mr BROWN—I will content myself, then, by moving the first resolution.

The CHAIRMAN—That is :—

“That, in the opinion of this Conference, it is desirable that separate provision, such as is indicated in the Draft Order, should be made for special classes of children.”

Mr FENTON JONES (Chairman, Hackney Union)—As this opinion is in full accord with the ideas of the Board of Guardians I represent, I beg to second the resolution. I quite agree with the remark that it affects one or two individual Boards, but I hold it is a matter which affects the whole of the metropolis. I may say we experienced great trouble at our schools owing to ophthalmia. We have had something like 140 or 150 cases to deal with, but we have received great help from the Hanwell Schools which have assisted us in that direction. At the same time, I think it would be a most expensive matter if we were to provide for accommodation in every individual union. (Hear, hear.) We are speaking about expenditure. I for one think, and I am sure this Conference will agree, that a new and expensive board is undesirable. We have already at our command a board which can deal with this question most effectually, the same as they do with fever and small pox cases. If we want to eradicate ophthalmic cases, there is only one course open, and that is to take the children away from our schools without delay. It is a very serious matter, a matter of importance to the poor children afflicted. I think we must try as far as we can to go before the Local Government Board as an united body, all interested in the same degree, and upon the one broad general principle to do the best we can for the poor of the metropolis. I am very pleased to hear Mr Brown. He has taken a common-sense view of the case, and I think his views should be accepted by the whole Conference.

Mr HELBY (Camberwell, and one of the Managers of the South Metropolitan District Schools)—I beg to submit the following amendment :—

“That this meeting approves of the principle of a Central Metropolitan Board for the reception, relief, and education of all classes of Poor Law children chargeable to the Unions and Parishes in the Metropolis, but objects to any separate provision being made for the several classes named in the Draft Order of the Local Government Board.”

One thing is very clear, and that is that this meeting must come to some decision. A previous speaker has moved a resolution which deals with only a portion of this question, and therefore I have thought it better to deal with the whole question, because although we may decide upon the question of separate provision for the school children and others referred to in this Order, still we do not at all refer to the large question of a central authority for dealing with the whole of the children of London. Therefore, under these circumstances, I had better move this as an amendment dealing with

the whole question. It is unnecessary for me to refer at all to the various points in connection with the present system of dealing with the children in London, for we all know how it operates. Mr Wainwright's experience is a very long experience of a certain school in London. Of course his experience is very different from my short experience of four or five years in the Sutton schools. You, sir, stated in your opening remarks that as far as possible we should avoid dealing with our own separate schools or establishments, but I am somewhat in this position that a previous speaker has practically dealt with his—Mr Wainwright with the North Surrey—and therefore I cannot help referring to our own children in the Camberwell Union or Parish. We are in this position that there we have something like 250 to 260 children, most of whom at the present time are afflicted some way or another.

As a matter of fact we could only remove seven to the Sutton schools this week, the result of which is we lose an amount from the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund which in our case reaches £1,500 a year, and to a poor parish like ours this is something serious. In these circumstances, it is necessary something should be done with the view of providing the necessary accommodation for children suffering from the various diseases referred to in this Draft Order of the Local Government Board. At the present time the children suffering in this way are receiving no education whatsoever. For some years the Sutton managers have been unable to receive any of these children, for the simple reason that the accommodation would not be allowed to be provided. The Local Government Board say, "We have already sufficient bricks and mortar in barrack schools;" and they add, "We will not allow any more building in regard to your schools." I think most of the members here will agree that the system should be dispensed with. But the point is, how are these children to be dealt with? The Local Government Board has issued this proposed Draft Order with regard to it, and it does seem to me, when we are dealing with a number of children considerably under two thousand, that it is taking a hammer to crack a nut. What do we want with a body of fifty-five or thereabouts to look after the children? I cannot understand it. How are the children to be dealt with? Are they to be dealt with by the Guardians themselves? What does it mean? It means separate authority, building little schools—first of all for ophthalmia; second, for skin and scalp diseases, and so on. The expenditure for that would be something enormous. What they suggest is a central authority whereby all these cases may be dealt with. But it seems to me, as I have said before, that with so small a number of children it is like a hammer cracking a nut. A sick asylum is to my mind unnecessary altogether. What are the advantages of a central board. That is what we are here to-day to discuss. First of all, my contention would be that there is too much uniformity in London already. We know perfectly well what it is with regard to Poor Law children as well as to Poor Law

administration generally. Take diet and many other things that crop up in the course of the work of school managers, and it will be admitted that there ought to be a system of uniformity. The next thing is, classification. It is an impossibility at the present time in our schools to go into the question of classification in the manner we desire. If we had a central board we could deal with the classifications referred to in the Order in a wise way; and furthermore, our space would be much better arranged had we this central board. The next question to arise is the audit of accounts. If we had a central board we might have a small audit board to look after these things.

The CHAIRMAN—I think, sir, you have really expressed your views, and there is no use going into these details.

Mr HELBY—Well, then, I shall content myself with moving the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN—Is that seconded?

Mr ECROYD (St Olave's)—I second it, as I consider it a very good idea. I think if you are going to have any new authority it should be one on the lines laid down by Mr Helby, and that we ought to have a vote in its election. I formally second the amendment.

Rev. E. C. HAWKINS (City of London)—I ventured to send up my name as a Guardian of the City of London Union, one of the few unions which has not yet sent in its reply to the Local Government Board, and I think it might be of some interest to this meeting to know what views the City of London Union holds regarding this Draft Order, and also because we represent a body that has attempted to grapple with one of the class of cases of disease with which the Draft Order takes notice—I mean, ophthalmia. I do not know if I shall be out of order if I read this draft of their reply to the Local Government Board.

The CHAIRMAN—Will it take long?

Rev. E. C. HAWKINS—It will take much less time than some of the speakers have already occupied; but I must first state that it has not yet been presented to our Board.

Mr LILE (City of London)—I rise to a point of order.

Rev. E. C. HAWKINS—I am in the hands of the Chairman.

Mr LILE—As a member of the City of London Board, I object to Mr Hawkins reading a report which comes before our Board next Tuesday.

The CHAIRMAN—I am afraid I must leave that to Mr Hawkins; I cannot prevent him from reading the report as an expression of his own views.

Rev. E. C. HAWKINS—I will read the report. I may say it was entrusted to a Committee to prepare; I am not the author of it, except in the sense that all members of Committee are. It is to be laid before the managers at Hanwell this afternoon, and I will take the responsibility. I will read it now, as I am glad to observe that it is in accord with several of the suggestions made by the first speaker

to-day. I will not make any comment upon it at all, to diminish the grievance and irregularity of which I am guilty. "The Guardians of the City of London Union having considered the circular letter from the Local Government Board of 19th January, and the Draft Order enclosed therewith embodying the proposal to form a Metropolitan Union and Parish School into a Children's Asylum District in respect of certain classes of children, desire to put on record their objections to such a plan, namely—(1) That it would diminish the local and personal interest of Guardians in children of their own neighbourhood; (2) that the aggregation of large numbers of children diseased in body, feeble in mind, or demoralised in character, tends to spread and intensify the disorders which it is intended to redress (Applause); (3) that the proposed asylum or asylums will involve a vast expenditure on sites and buildings, and the creation of a new staff for each department—(Hear, hear)—where buildings, staff, and sites already exist, and need only extension or development. (Hear, hear.) With reference to one of the classes mentioned in the Draft Order, namely, children suffering from ophthalmia, they beg to remind the Local Government Board of the manner in which this disease has been dealt with by the managers of the Central London District Schools at Hanwell. After virtually stamping out the disease in their own school by complete isolation in all departments of school life, school dormitories, dining-hall, play-ground, they opened their wards to ophthalmic children of all parishes of the metropolis for a moderate, fixed, weekly payment. Nearly three hundred children are now under treatment there. The Guardians of the City of London Union fail to see why the same principle ought not to apply, and why the same methods should not be adopted in the cases of the other class of children enumerated in the Draft Order. They beg to recommend accordingly—First, That the class of children suffering from weakness or disease of body be severally assigned for careful treatment to some school or group of schools, according to their capacity of accommodation, regard being had to the number of children educated in each school, so that the larger number of children should be allotted generally to the smaller schools, and the smaller number to the larger schools. The Guardians think that such a breaking-up of the classes of diseased children is the best attainable way of meeting the objection No. 2, stated above, about the aggregation of diseased children. Second, That no school should be allowed to consist of feeble-minded children alone. (Hear, hear.) The Guardians are very strongly of opinion that the best way of treating such children with the view of their improvement, and without interfering with the regular education of the school, is to separate them for the purposes of education only, and in all the other departments of school life to allow them, under proper supervision, to mix freely with the other children, and that this plan can be most easily carried out in the schools or union of the parish to which such children belong. Third, That the charge and remand boys, considering their small

number and short stay, the inconvenience of sending them to and from another centre, and the evils inseparable from herding together with a number of criminal or demoralised boys, can be most conveniently dealt with by the parish or union to which they belong, or in which they are found or charged or remanded, as the case may be.” (Applause.)

Mr WM. CROOKS, L.C.C. (Poplar)—I do not know exactly the position I am in, and therefore I would propose a motion, which may either be put as a rider to the resolution or as a substantive motion :—

“That this Conference is of opinion that the establishment of a new and distinct Metropolitan Central Authority for the care of a section of Poor Law children is undesirable, and calculated to lead to needless expense, without any guarantee that the children would be better dealt with than under some distinctly elected body.”

I took the liberty of going to the County Council, and got this cartoon showing the overlapping of the various departments you have in London—under the Home Office, industrial schools, reformatory schools, and industrial schools for boys; then there are the London County Council and the Metropolitan Asylums Board, with its imbecile asylums and hospitals to which children are sent. The School Board which is under the Education Department is also shown here—truant schools, schools for the deaf, dumb, and blind. And now the proposed new Asylums Board is to have ophthalmic, sick, and ringworm homes, and feeble-minded homes for children. Why, it is “confusion worse confounded.” The whole of our work certainly ought to be the simplification of dealing with the children. As I said before at one of our Conferences, every one seems desirous of finding some special scheme. In fact, you cannot have a penny-in-the-slot arrangement. Here, under this new authority, you are going to have the *ex officio* element. I venture to say I could name twelve persons at the present moment who expect to go upon this new board. I go a little further and say that I could name three who each expect to be Clerk of the new Asylums Board. Surely it is time we were above this sort of thing. Our earnest desire is to see the right thing. If you are going to multiply authorities, then you will not get any simplification whatever. If we are so exceedingly anxious to get a new central authority, and that at great expense, the rich should bear their share of the burden. The poor we talk about on platforms, but we do not talk about them in Conferences, as we are much better than anybody else; but I would suggest, if we are to make an alteration, why not ask the London School Board to take over the whole lot? There is no objection to the London School Board taking the whole over; but let that Board be elected on the County Council area, that is, two members for every district, and then you double the size of the School Board. The Metropolitan

Asylums Board has no special provisions for dealing with these children, and therefore it seems to me that the London School Board is the authority. The Guardians could see that by law their interest is safeguarded by the right of appointing managers to any of such schools. Do not, however, create a new authority who will be responsible to no one—a lot of somebodies who would deny Guardians asking why they did a particular thing, and who would turn round and say, “Oh, no, I am elected for three years.” (A voice, “Nominated.”) That is worse. If there is to be such an authority, the School Board is the proper body, the proper safeguard for the children.

The CHAIRMAN—I think that this will come as an amendment to the second part of Mr Brown’s resolution. (After reading the amendment.) I think, perhaps, after all, it would be better to take it as a second amendment, which it probably is, but I would ask Mr Crooks to move it later on.

Mr LILE (City of London)—The resolution before us is in favour undoubtedly of a special board being elected for the purposes of these classes of children as stated in the Order of the Local Government Board. The amendment of Mr Helby is really an amendment in favour of the Report of the Departmental Committee which was issued some months ago, but I think myself that if we mean that this board shall not be created we should be very decided in our views. Let the Local Government Board know that the Guardians of the metropolis, who have worked this in the past, will not readily consent to the creation of such a board without going to Parliament for the purpose. That is the weak point, in my estimation, in their suggested Order; and it shows weakness as well on the part of the Local Government Board in putting out this feeler. They do not put this out as a direct Order. They say, “We think of doing so,” and that in my opinion is only to get the comments of the workers on the different London Boards of Guardians and Schools in particular. For some years I have taken an active part in the work, first of all on the Lambeth Board. Lambeth has its school at Norwood, but also sends a manager to the school at Hanwell, and I cannot this morning speak very well upon this question, unless I speak more especially on the Ophthalmic School at Hanwell, as for two years I have been chairman of that committee. I am glad this morning to hear more than one ready to allude to the good work we have been doing, not only for our children, but for the children in the metropolis in connection with the Hanwell Schools. Mr Chaplin gave information to the House of Commons only a week or two ago, and there is no doubt of its accuracy, that there are about 700 children in the District Schools in the metropolis suffering from this unfortunate complaint. To-day at Hanwell we have 260. Only 35 of them, remember, are our own children—all the rest are children from Bethnal Green, Hackney, and the other schools over the metropolis. Dr Stephenson—and there is no better expert in

London as far as ophthalmia is concerned—has recently gone to all the schools in the metropolis by order of the Local Government Board, and has sent to them a report. Now, if we consent readily to this Order becoming a fact, we know not what expense we are going to incur. (Hear, hear.) And not only so, but if a board is required to be created, let it in the present day at any rate be a representative board. The second part of Mr Brown's resolution refers to the Asylums Board. Well, I think myself the Asylums Board have their work cut out for them, and if I had my way I would like to suspend that Board to-morrow, and not allow representatives of the Guardians to be the members of the Board. I would go direct to the ratepayers, and have no representatives of the Local Government Board on the new board. And are you going to create a new board of the same class when there is plenty of objection to the Board already in existence? And are you going to give them more powers and work? They say they have quite enough to do now without throwing over to them this responsibility. We have succeeded on the whole—as an illustration—these last three years in taking over, independent of our own children, 200 of the 700 children in question. Why, in South London, should not a school be created, as at Hanwell, for the children of South London, and in that way begin to stamp out this disease, for I believe it can be stamped out as we have proved it in our case? Two years ago at Hanwell we had 200 or 300 children, and to-day we have only 35. I cannot vote for the resolution as moved by Mr Brown, and I cannot vote for the amendment of Mr Helby, as it supports the action of the Commission, which was a one-sided one, an unfair one. The workers at Hanwell, and the Chairman of the Hanwell Schools, were never called upon to go to the Commission and answer questions, because they knew quite well—I do not wish to speak too much in favour of our schools—but the Commission knew quite well that regarding our schools they could not put a finger on anything they could object to. Apparently they did not want information from Hanwell, as it would not suit their purpose. In conclusion, sir, I would say that I would rather support Mr Crooks' resolution than any other before the meeting to-day.

Miss LIDGETT (St Pancras)—The few observations which I wish to make are in support of the original resolution moved by Mr Brown. I should like first to say that I do not see why there can be any confusion in separating the different classes, why all the children between one and sixteen must come under only one authority, any more than why the people between sixteen and sixty should all come under one authority. Between the ages of sixteen and sixty we have people in hospitals, in infirmaries, in workhouses, and say, in prisons; but none of us think that all these people ought to be lumped together, as between sixteen and sixty, with no other distinction. We in our schools have been doing our best, and in a far better manner than is supposed by the general public, in giving school education and medical

treatment to the children of all classes. But in one thing we have been simply baffled, and that is in combining medical treatment and school teaching. The only school I am aware of where that is done is at Hanwell. We are so far baffled that we cannot even send many of the children that need school teaching to our schools, because they need medical treatment. Our hearts ache and are worn out by looking at these children in the wards of our workhouses, and I would hail any system that can be reasonably devised to put these children under, so that at the same time they might receive medical treatment, school teaching, and some amount of industrial training. At the present time they are condemned, I acknowledge, to a training in pauperism. Many of them are in our infirmaries, thus leaving them in close contact with paupers of the worst class, with whom it is simply absurd for them to come in sight of. However, for children suffering from ringworm and ophthalmia it would be a crying shame to keep them together in one school, as it must make matters worse. I am not a medical person, but I believe that certain classes could be arranged by which the children could be grouped sufficiently for medical treatment and school teaching in different parts of London. These children come under the care of the Guardians simply because they are destitute, therefore they should not be removed out of the hands of the Guardians. It has been said that they should be taken out of the hands of the Guardians. That is not reasonable, to my mind—(Hear, hear)—but I think the Guardians should so group themselves as to deal with them more efficiently than they have been able to do hitherto. There are two reasons why the Guardians should still be the authority, however grouped. First, that the ratepayers and inhabitants of the parish ought to be represented in this matter, and their only representatives are the Guardians. That is from the public point of view. On the other hand, the children belong to families, broken-down families—some of them very disreputable, I am sure—but I have a very strong and old-fashioned prejudice that the family is somehow or other a unit that we must not ignore. We have talked of classification and so much of individualisation that we might think that ophthalmia constituted one large family. Now, I think, that whatever the sufferings of these children, there must be some authority whose duty it is to keep in view the family, the proper responsible person, father, mother, or grandparent. For want of having a sufficiently strict eye upon such matters the grandchildren of a large builder in a successful way of business were admitted to our parish school. Of course, the people who keep their eye upon such matters brought that to light, and the grandfather recognised his duties, paid some of his debt, and took the children home. That sort of liberty and encroachment upon the public would be sure to become more frequent if we gave way to this idea of classification only by disease or by age.

Mr FREDERICK PURCHESE (St Pancras)—I may say at the outset that the St Pancras Board are unanimous in favour of such a

suggestion as moved by Mr Brown to-day. We are quite in favour of the Order of the Local Government Board, but we are really opposed to another central authority. (Hear, hear.) And what we suggest is that the Asylums Board—although I quite agree with Mr Crooks, for I always believe in direct representation, and I hold the Act of Parliament of 1894 was right in doing away with the *ex officio* business. That gave general satisfaction to the ratepayers of London. I only wish the Metropolitan Asylums Board were directly responsible to the people, but we think it far better that the Asylums Board should deal with the five different classes of cases suggested rather than create another board, which would mean a very great expense by bringing in a lot of additional officers, with new offices as well. It was said that the Asylums Board had very little work in connection with children. They have a great deal to do with feeble-minded children at Darenth, and they have also the “Exmouth” ship. The Asylums Board is composed of seventy-three members; three are *ex officio*, and two-thirds are representatives of Boards of Guardians. I do not think it would be impracticable to raise the number, more especially when we consider that the London County Council numbers 137. We met in this room some time ago to consider the Departmental Committee’s Report, when they suggested to take away the entire control of the children from the Guardians. We met here, and passed a resolution against that idea, and urging that it should not be carried into effect. And what is the position to-day? Mr Chaplin’s suggestion is a compromise, and I think we, as representing the ratepayers of London, would be very wise to-day in accepting the compromise. Mr Chaplin said he had not to go to the House of Commons on this matter, but that he would await the decision of this Conference. We know that, like the poor, ophthalmia and ringworm is always with us in our workhouses. We have pauperism and the pauper taint with these children, and their receiving school education is a matter which must be considered by every one who has a desire to put these children on a footing by which they can fight the battle of life. This can only be done by giving them a good sound education and a good physical constitution. Every one who has been connected with Poor Law work for a number of years can see, as far as the children are concerned, in the infirmaries and workhouses and schools that our efforts have not been satisfactory, because children have been taken away just at the most impressive period of their lives, without having the advantage of any schooling whatever. We sent children to Hanwell, and it was shown that it was possible to treat disease and educate children at the same time. What is suggested now is that these children should be dealt with. We should say, deal with the children as a whole, deal with them on some uniform lines; and I think we would be wise to-day in supporting Mr Brown and those who have spoken on behalf of his motion. Mr Chaplin said it was possible he might enforce his authority for another authority, but if we show we are opposed to

another authority we will have some opportunity or chance of getting our views entertained.

Mr H. J. COOK (Chairman, Forest Gate Schools)—I feel I can speak with some experience from my long connection with Forest Gate Schools, and my feeling is very strongly this, that we must move by compromise. We none of us can carry a scheme which we think on the whole is best. Now I think that we agree to this extent, that it is necessary that provision should be made for the classes of children, or at least for most of the classes of children, alluded to in the Local Government Board's Order. As time advances we advance in our ideas, and we do see all of us that there is special need for dealing with these children in special ways. One point on which there seems to be great divergence of opinion is, what authority can best deal with them. I hold very strongly that the Guardians are the best authority. We know the children's parents; we know the need of the districts and the way in which these children are most requiring our care; and therefore I am anxious that this authority should be kept in the hands of the Guardians. (Hear, hear.) I myself do not see the great probability of such an enormous expense being caused by Mr Chaplin's Order when carried out. For this reason: the amount of room and the attention that we have to provide for these children in our own schools at the present time will be lessened, inasmuch as serious cases will be removed from our schools. Now, it must be patent to all of us that the Local Government Board will certainly reduce the number of children in our schools, or rather will increase the cubical air space required for the children, and if that is done we will have to go to the expense—if we keep the schools as they are now—of building to provide the extra accommodation wanted. If, on the other hand, we say we will remove the sick children from our schools, we thereby make available an amount of space which at present we have not for the children. To that extent there is economy if this new authority is formed, necessitating that that authority shall build a new institution for dealing with these separate classes of children. Let that authority be formed; let them deliberate as to how best they can provide for these children. If they find that by hospitals or asylums they can deal best with the children, or by converting some of the present schools into schools for special children, let them deal with them in these ways, but let the authority remain with the Guardians. I object to the Asylums Board, for I am one of those who feel that the Asylums Board have already on their hands far more work than they can do. They make themselves think they are doing it with perfect satisfaction to the public—(laughter, and a voice, "Far from it")—but I feel that with the great responsibilities, as Mr Chaplin says, that are thrown upon that Board, or may be thrown upon them at any time, it would be very unwise to give to them all these extra claims to their attention, and constant committee work thrown upon them. Therefore I am

opposed to them. I am equally opposed to Mr Crooks' suggestion that the whole work should be thrown upon the Educational Department, the London School Board. They may be the expert authority upon teaching, just as we are the expert authority in dealing with the health and the boarding and home life of the children, and I think it would be a great mistake to put on an untried Board like the London School Board duties which have been carried on by ladies and gentlemen of long experience in the domestic side of the pauper child's life. Therefore I do hope that whatever may be our own individual preference for one scheme or another, we shall not let this matter be wrecked to-day by want of unanimity, and go back to the Local Government Board and say that the Guardians of London hold such different views that it must be left to Mr Chaplin as he thinks best. I feel quite sure that if we take such a step we shall regret it. Mr Chaplin will then have to act independently of us, and throw up his own scheme and carry out the recommendations—the unfortunate and ill-considered recommendations of the Departmental Committee. (Applause.)

Mr R. CLAY (Shoreditch)—I have been struck with the familiarity of the arguments used. One recognises just the arguments advanced for District Schools forty years ago—aggregation, classification, &c. We cannot see that there can be any possible difficulty; and yet we are told that the District School system is a huge mistake, that aggregation of children is a huge blunder, and should be broken up and dispersed. It has been also assumed that there is no other way than this aggregation for dealing with children of these classes. I should like to say, while risking the displeasure of this meeting, that in Shoreditch, at any rate, we have met the requirements of these classes. At the present time we have not got one child in the workhouse or infirmary suffering from ringworm or ophthalmia. At the present time we have seven children suffering from ophthalmia and twenty from ringworm, but for these the Guardians have made arrangements for accommodation at the Cottage Homes far removed from the healthy children. Naturally we feel it to be a serious burden on a poor parish, and that the whole metropolis should bear its share. I can quite understand one gentleman speaking of the ease with which he would get rid of these difficulties by passing on the result of that administration to another authority. Naturally the parish that has attempted to do its best resents that, and resents it most strongly. Then again we find, and in that we entirely agree with the Departmental Committee, that you are going to remove ophthalmic and ringworm patients. I say that where they are not isolated, the Local Government Board should long ago have insisted upon isolation. I take it, however, that it cannot be denied that cases remain in the body of a school, or wherever the children may be undetected and unobserved, and therefore are centres of infection. That means this, that centres of infection are enlarged, considerably increased, and thus you have a huge epidemic. How is this to be

provided for? You put up an hospital here, and a school there, but what is wanted is promptness, promptitude in removing these children. The Guardians will no longer have these places of isolation; they will rely upon another board, and during that time children so afflicted remain a centre of danger to the whole of the schools in which they are placed. Therefore I recognise the danger of this responsibility being removed from the Guardians or managers as the case may be. Then you are told that this need not be any expense. If you try to work it out at all you will find there must be at least twenty institutions provided. Unless you aggregate this loathsome disease in huge masses, you must have something like twenty establishments scattered over the country under this central authority. Now as to the control of these establishments we have heard lately of the scandal attached to the "Shaftesbury" training ship. With the loose control which must necessarily follow in establishments far removed from each other—from the want of local control and interest, which I defy you to create by Select Committees of nice people, scandals might be expected. Love of uniformity, I might also say, is constantly developing among us. The curse of childhood is uniformity, and there is too much hungering after it now. You are going by your superior organised methods and principles, which, however, are right principles, to turn that child into an angel; but I do protest against this idea of uniformity.

Mr W. VALLANCE (Whitechapel)—Will Mr Clay tell us what provision Shoreditch makes for the seven ophthalmic children?

Mr CLAY—We have a teacher. They are certainly at half time. They have two and a half hours' teaching alternately morning and afternoon. The teacher is specially selected.

A DELEGATE—How, may I ask, is it possible for any ordinary practitioner to diagnose ophthalmia? It is held that an ordinary practitioner cannot diagnose cases.

Mr DUNCAN MILLIGAN (Chairman, Wandsworth and Clapham Union)—I rise to say a few words in support of the resolution proposed by the Chairman of the Whitechapel Union. I am very much gratified to see myself surrounded by men and women representative of the intelligence of the various Boards of Guardians—men and women whom I know have given, I might be charged with exaggeration if I said their lives to this work of dealing with children—but I will content myself by saying, have given very many years of their lives to this work. But I am equally conscious that there are some who are unable to deal intelligently with this question—some, I am painfully aware, have only that little knowledge which is a most dangerous thing. We may disagree with the methods which we may decide upon to adopt or recommend at this Conference to-day, but we are all agreed that something must be done; and I hope each one of us will be imbued with a strong desire to improve where we may improve, and at any rate do something in the way of improve-

ment in dealing with the children who have to be administered to under the Poor Law. But we are in a most difficult position. It appears to me as if there was a house to let, or likely to be let, and everybody wants to get into it. There is first one body and then another mentioned as being the very best, and I am afraid that unless we decide upon the one by a large majority the Conference will be of very little effect. I believe that the best medium of dealing with these children, speaking as a school manager of many years, is isolation. My experience as a school manager is, with regard to ophthalmia, that we can stamp it out. We did so twenty years ago, and we can do it again if they will give us the chance. We have not had any difficulty in the intelligent and honourable Board of Guardians with whom I have had the pleasure to work in educating ailing children. We do educate them in our schools, but separate from the healthy children, and we have no difficulty at all. Still I am quite willing to put aside my own personal feeling and try to obtain a benefit for the whole of the Poor Law children in London. I feel inclined, after listening to the frank admission of our President, to adopt the recommendation. I know words have been said to belittle somewhat the power of the Order, but the Local Government Board has power to issue such an Order, and I may say I would rather accept ten thousand such Orders than I would the biassed recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee. The only way we have at present of dealing with our children is farming them out among people who are not doing the work for philanthropy's sake, but simply for *£ s. d.*

Mr COLLINS (St Olave's)—I desire to support the amendment moved by Mr Helby, that the control of the children be placed under some central authority, and I further think that that central body should be the one suggested by Mr Crooks—the London School Board. I do not think any body could make a worse mess in dealing with these children than those who have had so much experience—(laughter)—than those who have already dealt with them. In March last I attended a Conference on the Education Bill, under which the children were to be included, and I heard speeches from the same gentlemen of the same class bitterly abusing the proposal for the removal of the children from the hands of those who had to deal with them. I then supported the recommendations of the Departmental Committee. A Committee was appointed at that Conference; it had to draft a report and call the Conference together again in order that they might present their report on the Departmental Committee's proposals. This Committee has not been called together at all. The Education Bill was dropped, and the matter was dropped in Parliament for the time being. It is admitted to-day, and I am surprised to see the change—every member who has spoken, North Surrey Schools, Central London District Schools, every one has spoken of the difficulties they have to deal with in the management of these children. But no suggestion has come forward, except to accept the Order of the Local Government Board. That Board

have put down their foot and said they must deal with these children. I will present this suggestion to Mr Crooks: Expiring obsolete bodies who have got out of date always cling on when their powers are going to be taken away from them. ("Oh, oh.") It is the same with the City Companies. (Cries of "Chair.")

The CHAIRMAN—I think Mr Collins is out of order. He is making reflections upon Boards of Guardians which are certainly neither called for nor true. (Applause.)

Mr COLLINS—Then I am pleased to be in the company of such men as Sir John Gorst and Mr Mundella. That is the only explanation, but I am sorry I cannot withdraw it. These are my opinions—the opinions of one who does not profess to have any experience at all. (Hear, hear, and laughter.)

The CHAIRMAN—Order, order.

Mr COLLINS—I am one of those who take a common-sense view of matters. I happen to be a member of the South Metropolitan Board of Managers, and I also happen to be a member of St Olave's Board of Guardians. I have thus taken a great interest in the children belonging to the class to which I myself belong. I am seriously interested in the welfare of these children, but it appears to me, and it has always appeared to me, that those who have had charge of the children in the past have neglected their duty. It is time for a change, and the representatives of such bodies have recognised it, and the thing is only to do it proper and hand the care of these children over to the education authority, that is, the School Board, under the Education Department. Their business is education, ours is administration of the Poor Law. We are not experts in education. I support Mr Helby's amendment.

Mr DOUGLAS GORDON (Chairman, Chelsea Union)—I am not going to detain you above a moment with regard to this, but I would point out what has been said by one or two speakers as to absolute uniformity among children. Nobody wishes to have absolute uniformity; we want child-life to be child-life; but there seems to be a feeling that this provisional Order will result in bringing about uniformity. I venture to think that such a thing will not happen. The Order proposes to deal with special classes of children which require special treatment. It does not propose to deal with them, as I understand it, altogether. It proposes to deal with them during a temporary period, and then when properly treated to return these children to their own particular Boards of Guardians to be dealt with by them. Boards of Guardians are the proper people to have control over the children, and I attach great importance to the factor of home life. The difficulties that have arisen in dealing with children have arisen mainly through these special diseases and special circumstances which the proposed Order recognises, therefore I am very strongly of opinion that to adopt the Order as suggested would relieve Boards of Guardians of their difficulties. Children would be temporarily treated under this Order, and would come

back to their own district. I believe if we do not approve of this Order, the chances are we will get a worse one—(Hear, hear)—and I cannot but think that this Order is a statesmanlike view of the matter, removing as it does temporarily from the cognisance of the Guardians these difficulties with which they have to contend. As to what authority should have the control of the children temporarily, or whether there should be a new authority, is another matter. I have an open mind ; I want to know about it, but I hope this meeting will adopt the opinion expressed by you, sir, in your opening remarks, that the best thing we can do for the welfare of the children is to accept this Order.

The CHAIRMAN—We have had a very full debate ; a very large number of Guardians have spoken. I have three more names before me, but I am very anxious that the division should take place before the Guardians go away to lunch. There is no certainty of securing a full attendance afterwards, and therefore I would ask your permission to call upon the Rev. Brooke Lambert, who was on the Departmental Committee, and then I should call upon Mr Brown to reply. I apologise, Dr Lindon has also sent up his name.

Rev. BROOKE LAMBERT (Greenwich)—I have but a very few words to say, but as one of the members of the Departmental Committee, I would venture to suggest an addendum, to the effect that the Boards of Guardians had not been unworthy of the trust reposed in them, inasmuch as every one of the experiments which were suggested as advisable by that Committee had been tried in one or other of the Boards of Management. I do sincerely hope that the resolution which is proposed to-day will be carried, because this is just another instance of experiment tried by one of the District Boards, and tried so successfully. The Department, as a Department, looking to the success of the experiment, has a desire to enlarge the experiments, but I think the way in which it has to be carried out must be a matter of after-discussion. I object to the idea of handing over these children to the Education Department, because that Department, when it was proposed it should take the matter over, said it was so overburdened with work that unless there was a general devolution of its authority it was impossible for the Department to do so. I object to it being handed over to the London School Board, because I think that Board has far more work than it possibly can do, and, as already proved, it is not able to manage its own accounts of the “Shaftesbury.” (Applause.) Further, as regards the statement of one of the Guardians who spoke here, that Hanwell was the only school where children under infirmity treatment were taught, that I believe to be an incorrect statement. At any rate, in the much-abused school at Sutton every one of the infirmity children has a good education, and in the infirmity and workhouse at Greenwich the children are also under educational influence. I trust that this Order, which is the direct result of the scheme tried by one of the well-managed District Schools of London, will receive

the general approvement of the Guardians, leaving the details to be worked out in the future.

A DELEGATE—May I suggest that a great many of us could agree to Mr Brown's resolution if the words "some at least" were inserted before "classification of children." I think there is a necessity of dealing with certain classes and not with others.

The CHAIRMAN—May I point out that Mr Brown's motion does really mean to meet that view? It is in this way:—

"That provision, such as is indicated in the Draft Order, should be made for special classes of children."

It does not indicate what these classes are.

Mr BROWN—I think I should like to thank the Conference for the way in which they have received this resolution. I have no fault to find with the way in which it has been discussed. I carefully avoided details; many things I could have said, but I thought others would know them much better than myself. With regard to the last suggestion, I intended that that should be an idea underlying the resolution. I did not put the words in, but if it would be agreeable to the Conference I would have no objection whatever to add to the resolution these words, "Such as is indicated in the Draft Order should be made for *some at least* of the classes of children referred to." Of course I had in my mind the fact, the serious objection to the remand children being put under this new authority. It seems to me that could be better dealt with by another authority already existing. The remarks made by the lady who took part in the discussion exactly touched what I conceive to be the most important point of the whole. Miss Lidgett said if you allow this central authority, whoever it may be, to take up the question, you will be able to carry on education during separation. I venture to say that there is extreme difficulty on that point, as work is done by Boards of Guardians and District Schools. Once at the "Exmouth" we had twenty or thirty boys down with influenza. They had to go to the infirmary, and after a few days we had to tell off one of the teachers from the ship to teach them in the infirmary. It is to meet that very point that one is anxious that this separate authority should be formed. I thank the Conference for the way they have received the resolution, and I hope they will all accept it.

The CHAIRMAN—I think the suggestion made to Mr Brown would not be received by all of us so well as the resolution as it originally stood.

Mr BROWN—I wish to leave the hands of the Local Government Board as free as one can.

The CHAIRMAN—A motion has been moved by Mr Brown, and seconded by Mr Fenton Jones, and an amendment has been proposed by Mr Helby. (Here the Chairman read the motion as originally put, and the amendment.) Now, I will ask those in favour of the amendment to hold up their hands.

Mr BOLTON SMART (Stepney)—Before you put that I want to ask a question. I want to know whether you have received, or the deputation of last Saturday has received, any communication from the Local Government Board as to a new complication which has arisen since then?

The CHAIRMAN—No; I have not. Those who are in favour of the amendment please signify the same. To the contrary—It is impossible to count the very large number of hands against. I will now put the resolution.

Mr W. CROOKS (interposing)—What about my amendment, Mr Chairman?

The CHAIRMAN—Your amendment is, “That this Conference is of opinion that the establishment of a new and distinct metropolitan authority for the care of a section of Poor Law children is undesirable, and calculated to lead to needless expense, without any guarantee that the children will be better dealt with than under some other directly elected body at present in existence.”

A DELEGATE—Is that not an amendment to the resolution which is not yet before us? It seems to me that belongs to the second part of the resolution.

The CHAIRMAN—That was my first impression, but on reading it I think it does deal with the principles of the motion which Mr Brown has moved.

A LADY DELEGATE—If we vote for the first resolution, are we pledging ourselves to support the new central authority?

The CHAIRMAN—No, you are not doing that. That will come under the second part.

A DELEGATE—It seems to me that there is nothing to prevent us voting for both the amendment and resolution.

Mr W. CROOKS—May I respectfully submit, Mr Chairman, that your ruling is wrong. If Mr Brown’s resolution is carried, this Conference will agree to the creation of this new central authority pure and simple.

The CHAIRMAN—If Mr Brown’s resolution is carried, this Conference will be of opinion that provision indicated in the Draft Order will be made for special classes of children. That is a separate provision; it does not deal with the body that has to have control.

A DELEGATE—I take it that our next resolution will deal with the authority, and the two resolutions will go as the result of the Conference to-day to the Local Government Board.

Mr COLLINS—Are you going to put Mr Brown’s suggestions as one resolution or two resolutions?

The CHAIRMAN—I am putting Mr Brown’s resolutions as two. He has read the second one, but it will come before the Conference later on.

A DELEGATE—Will you allow me to move a direct negative?

The CHAIRMAN—It would not be necessary to move a direct negative; it would be put as a motion.

Another DELEGATE—There is some ambiguity in the words “indicated in the Draft Order.” What is indicated in the Draft Order but the constitution of the new central authority? There should be some words in that part of the resolution which would make it more definite.

The CHAIRMAN—How would it do in this way, “That in the opinion of this Conference it is desirable that separate provision, such as is indicated in the Draft Order, shall be made for certain classes”? That would indicate merely that separate provision is made; but the mere fact that a subsequent resolution is to be moved indicates that.

Mr CROOKS—May I point out that if it is carried, this Conference is bound to say what authority shall carry out that provision?

The CHAIRMAN—That will subsequently be put before you. I will now put Mr Crooks’ amendment.

A DELEGATE—I am perfectly in accord with Mr Crooks’ amendment, but surely it should come as an amendment to the second resolution.

The CHAIRMAN—I have carefully considered the matter, and it seems to me that Mr Crooks’ amendment goes to the principle of Mr Brown’s motion, and therefore on that ground it is an amendment to that part of the Order. I shall now put it. Those in favour of Mr Crooks’ amendment will signify the same in the usual way—29. To the contrary—36.

Mr CROOKS—Shall I be in order in calling for a division?

A DELEGATE—I should support that, for I hear many here say that they did not know what they were voting on.

The CHAIRMAN—I must rule that an adequate division has been taken upon that motion. The numbers were counted twice.

Mr CROOKS—Let the number of delegates present be counted altogether, so that we may know if every one has voted. The figures 29 and 36 ought also to be submitted to the Local Government Board to show that we are not unanimous.

The CHAIRMAN (after reading Mr Crooks’ amendment again)—No doubt in Mr Crooks’ speech he made certain remarks which are not embodied here, but this amendment has been put, and I must take it that the Conference has voted upon it, as 29 members held up their hands in its favour. Undoubtedly there are members of the Conference who have not voted.

Mr ECROYD (St Olave’s)—Well, am I in order to move “that this Conference is of opinion that any new authority shall be constituted direct by vote”?

The CHAIRMAN—Quite so, but on the next motion.

A DELEGATE—As there is an impression that several people have voted under a misapprehension, and a division has been claimed, would that not be a wise way out of the difficulty? We do not want to go on any false issue; we want to be unanimous. By a division the air would be cleared, and we would know where we are.

Mr COOK (Forest Gate)—It seems to me there is a difficulty, and it would be got over if you permit that to be done.

Mr BROWN—Could you allow Mr Crooks' amendment to come on the second resolution? (Hear, hear.)

Mr LILE—Just allow me to say this. The Chairman decidedly said when Mr Crooks spoke that his amendment would come on on the second part of Mr Brown's motion, and I do believe, seeing Mr Brown embraces in the second part of his resolution the Asylums Board, Mr Crooks' resolution will come better there, because it will be an objection to the authority being conferred on the Metropolitan Asylums Board.

The CHAIRMAN—With a slight alteration it might be made as an amendment to the second resolution, and if the Conference desire it, I would permit of it being put. It is essential that we should know what the Conference thinks best.

A DELEGATE—Had Mr Crooks not alluded to the London School Board, there would have been no division. I do not see any distinction between the amendment and the original motion.

The CHAIRMAN—I will, with the consent of the Conference, with perhaps some alteration by Mr Crooks, put his resolution at the second stage. Now I put Mr Brown's motion. In favour, 63; against, 15. Mr Brown's resolution is carried.

The CHAIRMAN—We now come to the second part of the question dealing with the central authority. I would suggest to Mr Brown that as his resolution is rather long, and dealing with a number of reasons, it would be much more likely to receive general assent if he left out the reasons.

Mr JAMES BROWN—I will try to condense what I have to say into a few minutes, but this is a more delicate task. In the first place, I speak here as a Guardian to-day, but I cannot conceal the fact that I take a very deep interest and as much share of the work as I possibly can in the Metropolitan Asylums Board. I know there are many things said about it—(A Voice, "And rightly too")—and probably some rightly deserved. I will not stand here as the apologist of the Metropolitan Asylums Board; they are quite able to take care of themselves, and at the proper time and proper place they are prepared to show that they as men and women do the best they can for the public good. I have now had the honour of being a member of that Board for five years. I have thrown myself very heartily into the work of that Board. I know it has many defects, but I know every member of that Board—and there are some dozen in this room who can bear me out—throws himself and herself heartily into the work, and all do the best they can to accomplish the work.

The CHAIRMAN—I would like to draw attention to this for a moment. We are now at 1.10. The discussion on the first question has practically covered the whole of this matter. I do not say that certain things might not again be said, but is it the wish of this Conference that we should have a fresh discussion, or that we should have

practically the questions put before us without any special remarks upon the wording of the resolution? (Cries of "Agreed.") Perhaps, Mr Brown, you would not deal with any question of principle as before, but only with the criticism of this new board.

MR BROWN—I think I have said enough to show that there are two sides to the question as to whether the Metropolitan Board does its work or not. That, however, is not the question before us. What I feel is that after a good deal of discussion, and many years' intimacy with the work, that it is entirely unnecessary, entirely inexpedient to-day to establish a new authority. I think upon that the whole Conference will be agreed, and I feel that the Local Government Board, in what was said to us last Saturday, really meant that we should go to the Conference and ask their opinion, because these words were used to me by one of the gentlemen there: "Go to the Conference, take their opinion, and come back to us and tell us what you really think." Let us to-day be practical; let us try and make a suggestion that can be carried out. For my own part, I would not consent to the Asylums Board for a moment if there was any other authority in existence to do the work. There is no other authority in existence that we can name or suggest who should take up this work. Well, I suggest this. We have all our hands full enough—we wish there were ten days in the week instead of seven—but here is a work which requires to be done by some central authority. Ask some central authority to take it for a time. I believe that before many years are over there will be some central authority to deal with the whole of our questions. But let that be. Here is the Asylums Board in existence, with all its staff, its present organisation, with its powers to deal with the whole of the children. Hand the work over to them just for a time. We may give it to them for to-day, and if the Government sees fit they may take it away to-morrow. A new burden is put on the shoulders of the department if a new authority with members elected in a similar way is established. You have to sweep away, as Mr Russell said to me, the whole establishment that has been formed for certain work. That means a heavy burden upon the ratepayers. However bad, or however much the Asylums Board may have failed in the past to do the work put upon them, I ask, will the new authority be quite perfect, and do the work without failure? It is a choice of evils. To my mind, let us have that which exists to-day, and use it as far as we are able, and when the time comes to make a change, take the work away, and there will be no expense to the ratepayers at all. I move this resolution entirely in the interests of the children. There is an authority that does exist, use it as far as we may, and take it away when the work is done. The Chairman suggests that some opinion should be got on the three reasons, and therefore I move—

"That in the opinion of this Conference it is unnecessary and inexpedient to constitute an entirely new authority, for the reasons—(1) That an authority with work largely akin to

that contemplated in the Order already exists for the entire metropolis ; (2) that the constitution of a new authority, similar to the Metropolitan Asylums Board, will have the effect of consolidating methods which will hereafter call for amendment ; (3) that it will involve the metropolis in a large expense incident to the establishment of a new authority.

“ For these reasons this Conference submits to the Local Government Board the expediency of placing the work—tentatively, at all events—in the hands of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, strengthened for the purpose in any way which the Local Government Board may consider desirable.”

Mr FENTON JONES—I have pleasure in seconding that resolution. It is, I think, the wisest thing that we can do at the present time. It will be a great saving to the ratepayers, because in the Metropolitan Asylums Board we have the machinery at hand. As far as economy is concerned it would be a wise move, and I hope and trust we shall be unanimous. It is absurd to talk of handing over ophthalmic and ringworm children to the London School Board. It would be a monstrous experiment.

The CHAIRMAN—I have received notice of two amendments. Mr Crooks’ amendment, which I think the Conference desired should be again brought before them :—

“ That this Conference is of opinion that the establishment of a new and distinct metropolitan authority for the care of a section of Poor Law children is undesirable, and calculated to lead to needless expense, without any guarantee that the children will be better dealt with than under some other directly elected body at present in existence.”

That seems to me ambiguous, undoubtedly. In the first place, it says that you shan’t have a new and distinct authority, but then it goes on to say, “ without any guarantee that the children will be better dealt with than under some other directly elected body.” That, without stating that there should be a directly elected body, seems implied and inferred. Now, Mr Ecroyd has sent up this :—

“ In the opinion of this Conference any new authority should be elected by direct public vote.”

That puts the matter directly and clearly before the Conference. It does not say School Board or County Council, but it implies that there should be a direct public vote for this new body. The difficulty that we were put in before by Mr Crooks’ amendment was that it said one thing, but it dealt by implication with something much more, and I cannot help thinking that it would be difficult, really difficult, to get the true opinion of the Conference by means of an amendment brought as Mr Crooks has brought it. If he had been willing to put

the matter perfectly distinctly, that it was desirable children would be better dealt with under a directly elected body, that would be a very comprehensive point of view.

Mr CROOKS—I prefer that the resolution, with all its ambiguity, should go before this Conference, for I want to point out that a directly elected body may mean Boards of Guardians, County Council, or it may mean the London School Board. It certainly does not mean any board to be created especially for this particular work. No doubt the Local Government Board will do that, no matter what you do. (A Voice, “No, it won’t.”) We have been told a dozen times it will; I am glad to hear you say it won’t. It means a large amount of the *ex officio* element on that Board. I am not inclined to multiply the number of elections all over London. You have got Vestries, Boards of Guardians, County Council, School Board, and now you want to multiply that by another. Now, I don’t. I believe that a directly elected body is the proper body to deal with the subject; but if the Local Government Board want to make an alteration, then let them do so, leaving it to a body who is directly elected and who are responsible to the ratepayers.

The CHAIRMAN—I have considered this matter, and I think Mr Crooks’ amendment must be divided into two, and go in this form: “That this Conference is of opinion that the establishment of a new and distinct central authority for the care of a section of the Poor Law children is calculated to lead to needless expense.”

Mr CROOKS—That is so.

The CHAIRMAN—That is a motion of itself, and perfectly comprehensible.

A DELEGATE—Is that an amendment to Mr Brown’s motion? I do not think it can be.

Mr LILE—Mr Brown says the Asylums Board, and this amendment says it should not be. It says a directly representative board, and not the Asylums Board.

Mr BROWN—In order to get that out of the way I would suggest that you cut my resolution into two: “That in the opinion of this Conference it is unnecessary and inexpedient to constitute an entirely new authority.”

The CHAIRMAN—It is the duty of the chairman to see that the motion is put in a way that is perfectly distinct, and that no ambiguity can be subsequently imputed to the Conference. The first part of Mr Brown’s motion is exactly the same as the first part of Mr Crooks’, and therefore Mr Crooks’ is not an amendment to that part. The part of Mr Crooks’ which might be an amendment is “that the children would be better dealt with under some directly elected body.” I do not hold that Mr Crooks’ amendment is an amendment to “that in the opinion of the Conference it is unnecessary and inexpedient to constitute an entirely new authority.” (Cries of “Agreed.”) That undoubtedly deals with the whole question, and deals with it in the same way that Mr Crooks deals with it. But before that matter is

considered, I certainly think that the Conference ought to take particularly into consideration the views that I expressed at the commencement, and that is, that if you have no new authority, you must point out what is the authority to which this work is to be handed over. The proposition is that the Metropolitan Asylums Board should be that body. (A Voice, "Discuss that after.") If we pass a resolution in favour of there being no new authority, your hands would be extremely tied, and we might get into a *cul de sac*, particularly if we determined that the Metropolitan Asylums was not the body to which it has to be transferred, and therefore I am anxious indeed that the Guardians should not pass a resolution which would make it perfectly impossible for them to come to any definite view.

A DELEGATE—Will you allow me to ask Mr Brown a question, as his answer might lead to our being unanimous? Would he alter his resolution in as far as the Metropolitan Asylums Board is to be so strengthened by the Local Government Board. He should not leave that to the Local Government Board, rather the addition should be made by elected members of the Guardians.

Mr BROWN—We may accept that later on.

The CHAIRMAN—The only motion that I have is in this form: "That in the opinion of this Conference it is unnecessary and inexpedient to constitute an entirely new body."

Mr ECROYD—Why, I have an amendment—

"That in the opinion of this Conference any new authority should be constituted by direct public vote."

The CHAIRMAN—That is not an amendment. If Mr Ecroyd would alter it to the effect that that new authority should be selected by direct public vote, that would be a pure amendment.

Mr CROOKS—Put my amendment to the meeting, and let us vote upon it pure and simple. The Conference is alive to ambiguities.

The CHAIRMAN—I would ask Mr Ecroyd whether he wishes to move this amendment.

Mr ECROYD—If this Conference wants a new authority, then I want it to be constituted by direct public vote.

Mr COLLINS—I would move another:—

"That in the opinion of this Conference it is desirable that the children under the control of Metropolitan Managers be transferred to the London School Board."

(Cries of "Oh, oh.")

A DELEGATE—Are we going to have three amendments before we settle with Mr Crooks'?

The CHAIRMAN—I have settled with Mr Crooks'. I have ruled him out of order. I say the second part may be moved as a separate amendment if he likes, and that is one covered by Mr Ecroyd.

Mr CROOKS—Surely the second part of my amendment would cover the whole ground both of Mr Collins and Mr Ecroyd. We want people who will be directly responsible to the rate-payers. There have been enough back-door arrangements in the past.

The CHAIRMAN—I think we must take the amendment, that it should be handed over to the London School Board. It is clearly an amendment.

Mr LILE—There were two amendments previous to the one just moved, and I hold you have already given us to understand that you are willing to take a vote on the second amendment, and that is whether we will vote for a directly representative body, or a body that is not directly representative. I think that simplifies matters, and we ought to vote Yea or Nay.

The CHAIRMAN—I quite agree; but I understand Mr Ecroyd is not now willing to move his amendment.

Mr COLLINS here handed in his amendment.

A LADY DELEGATE—I beg to second it.

The CHAIRMAN—The amendment is: “That in the opinion of this Conference the children at present under the control of the Metropolitan Guardians and School Managers be transferred to the London School Board.” (Cries of “No.”) Those who are in favour of that amendment will signify the same—5. To the contrary—lost by a large majority. Now, I have received from Mr Chaldecott (North Surrey District Schools) the following amendment:—

“That it be urged upon the Local Government Board, before constituting a new board, to consider whether the duties created by the proposed Order may not with advantage be conferred upon an existing authority.”

That is distinct, and I will ask whether it is seconded.

Mr CROOKS—Will the mover put in, “Without any *ex officio* element”?

Mr CHALDECOTT—No, I won’t.

The CHAIRMAN—Mr Brown has told me that he is willing to accept the amendment of Mr Chaldecott, “That it be urged,” &c. I would first ask you if it is your pleasure that Mr Brown be allowed to substitute this amendment for his own motion. (Cries of “Agreed.”)

Mr LILE—I would suggest as an amendment the words, “Without any nominees from the Local Government Board.” We ought at all events to put that in, because after all is said and done, this is going to be a very expensive matter if we have no one but the Local Government Board to rely upon.

Mrs EVANS (Strand)—I wish to ask whether that would not cover the fact of the children being still left under the care of the Guardians, because I believe we should be the existing authority.

The CHAIRMAN—It would be included.

Mrs EVANS—Do we understand there would be any necessity for a new board to be created?

The CHAIRMAN—We have carried a resolution that it is desirable that the children should be separated and dealt with by one body. That has been already agreed to. The question now remains, "What body?" and then this resolution, which has been accepted by Mr Brown, suggests asking the Local Government Board to see whether they cannot see their way to give it to some existing authority. An amendment is moved to that, that we should add "without any nominees of the Local Government Board." Is that amendment seconded?

Mr CROOKS—I second it.

The CHAIRMAN—Is it your pleasure that these words be added to the resolution?

Mrs LAWRIE (St George's, Hanover Square)—Nominees of the Local Government Board mean experts. Are those Guardians who, perhaps, have spent their lives in doing their own and other people's business very well indeed, prepared to express themselves as willing to undertake the work of experts in medical treatment. If you shut out from this new board the Local Government nominees, you give it into the hands of those elected by the Guardians. (Hear, hear.) Guardians have already elected a large number of managers to the Asylums Board, school managers, and managers for different bodies. It is not the best of Guardians who are always willing to accept these duties, because they are generally already fully employed. Their time is taken up with their own committees and their own Guardian work. What does that mean, but that in many cases you will get the refuse of the Board of Guardians? ("Oh, oh," and laughter.)

A DELEGATE—I rise to a point of order. I do not think this lady should be allowed to call any elected member of the people "refuse." (Hear, hear, and applause, and cries of "Withdraw.")

The CHAIRMAN—It is perhaps too strong a term.

Mrs LAWRIE—Well, those Guardians who are the least competent. We read that fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Are we, without the help of the Local Government Board and the assistance of educational and medical experts, prepared to hand over our children to such a body as would be created by those members of Guardians' Boards not already fully employed?

The CHAIRMAN—I now put the amendment, "Excluding all nominees of the Local Government Board." Those in favour of it—26. Those against—the amendment is lost by a considerable majority.

Mr CROOKS—The most extraordinary part of that vote is that the amendment has been lost because of the *ex officio* element, which is not representative.

The CHAIRMAN—Those who are in favour of Mr Chaldecott's amendment accepted by Mr Brown.

A DELEGATE—But that simply means School Board and Asylums Board, and I object to them strongly.

The CHAIRMAN—It is open to any Guardian to vote against this resolution.

Mr CHALDECOTT—As I drafted that resolution, may I say I did not mean only the London School Board or the Asylums Board. I intended to cover bodies of ladies and gentlemen, I personally think far more competent, namely, existing bodies of Guardians and District Schools.

A DELEGATE—The resolution, as read by our chairman, does not include Boards of Guardians, because in connection with that Boards of Guardians are not an authority in connection with a matter of that kind. There are a number of authorities, and if the Local Government Board—

Mr CROOKS—The Board of Works, then. (Laughter.)

A DELEGATE—Do you include Boards of Guardians as an existing authority?

The CHAIRMAN—They are an existing authority, but how far it is possible, in view of the first resolution, to give those powers to all the Boards of Guardians seems to me one for consideration. It is open to the Local Government Board to confer all the powers on Boards of Guardians.

A DELEGATE—There is but one authority that can be meant, and that is the Metropolitan Asylums Board. I beg to point out to the ladies and gentlemen present that the Local Government Board have no power by law to transfer those duties to any other body other than the Board formed under the Metropolitan Acts except by fresh legislation. They must either give the duties to the Metropolitan Asylums Board, or they must create a fresh board under the Metropolitan Poor Acts.

The CHAIRMAN—I have put in the one word “authorities.” Of course if there is not more than one authority the Local Government Board will take that into consideration, but it seems to me so desirable that we should have as nearly as possible a unanimous vote, that if the one word “authorities” will secure that, I would suggest it should be allowed to remain. (Cries of “Agreed.”) Those in favour of this motion will signify the same in the usual way—56. For the contrary—14.

Mr CROOKS—I won’t keep you a minute. I want to know whether the credentials of the delegates here this morning will be verified, and if the number of votes, and who they represent, will be sent to the Local Government Board, with the division, this morning?

The CHAIRMAN—That is a point I should like to ask the Conference. Is it your wish that these resolutions and the number of votes regarding them be sent to the Local Government Board. (Cries of “Agreed.”) All the representatives come from distinct authorities, either from Boards of Guardians or from the District Schools.

Mr LILE—I should like to move that the best thanks of the meeting be presented to Mr Bousfield for his conduct in the chair. (Applause.)

A DELEGATE—The whole thing has been a complete farce, but I believe Mr Bousfield has made a splendid chairman. I second the motion.

The proceedings then terminated.

West Midland District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

TWENTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE
FOR THE WEST MIDLAND DISTRICTS, COMPRISING
THE COUNTIES OF GLOUCESTER, HEREFORD, SALOP,
STAFFORD, WARWICK, AND WORCESTER, HELD AT
THE IMPERIAL HOTEL, MALVERN, ON 3RD AND 4TH
MAY 1897.

THE EARL BEAUCHAMP IN THE CHAIR.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

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MONDAY, 3rd MAY 1897.

THE EARL BEAUCHAMP, in opening the proceedings, referred to the condition of the working classes in the Middle Ages. He said :—

The early statutes of labourers had been the result of an attempt to thrust the labourer back into that position which was assigned to him in the feudal system, and the Poor Law of the sixteenth century was an application of the same principles under very different conditions. The vagabond and idler is to work ; those who stray must return to their parish or be severely punished. Alms and private

charity are forbidden to vagrants, in order to compel them to work. It was also a permanent instruction to local authorities to find employment for their own poor. The State also recognised the existence of another class, "the impotent and poor in very deed," and began to make authorised provision for its needs. In this way a principle of discrimination was introduced, and a field marked off where private charity could give free play to its benevolent instincts without doing an injustice. It is that principle which we are now in danger of forgetting, and for this reason, that those with whom the Poor Law deals fall naturally into two classes—the able-bodied and the impotent; and in very many respects the result of the workings of the Law since 1834 has been to confuse the two classes, and to try to apply to two absolutely different classes the same rules and regulations. Allow me, for a very few minutes, to say something of these two classes. The first, indeed, naturally separates itself into two divisions, *vagabonds* and the honest poor, and the history of the first is very simple. He has been from the first severely treated, and that rightly, and with a view of effecting that punishment Houses of Correction were generally established about 1580. From that time they have played the chief part in that repressive policy which Stuart and Hanoverian dynasties alike have exercised toward the idler, and in the House of Correction is to be found the first type of the workhouse. To the workhouse has descended their bad reputation, which I cannot but think is one of the first reasons for its dislike among the poor. For the first two hundred years of its history, Poor Law, I have said, aimed at the repression rather than the relief of rogues and vagabonds. Having said so much of the idler, I should like now, with your permission, to turn to the case of the honest poor, the second of those classes which I said came under the head of the able-bodied.

With regard to this class there is little I shall say. Legislation with regard to them has always been more or less under protest, and incidental rather to other purposes, such as the endeavour to check idleness and provide for the impotent.

There has, however, always been legislation under this head, and the principle of settlement is an old one, and lasted a long time. Elaborate schemes were frequently issued by those interested in the condition of the country. Stanley, a reformed highwayman, in 1646, was the first to suggest workhouses as places where the respectable poor should be set to work, protesting against the injustice of punishing people for idleness without giving them the chance to work. In 1704, a Bill passed by the House of Commons was rejected by the House of Lords which would have allowed the raising of capital by poor rates for the purpose of establishing manufactories where paupers might be employed. But soon after the Act of 1722 authorised the general erection of workhouses, and from that time the "offer of the house is, by the law of the land, definitely a test of destitution." How far that is at this moment right I am not now prepared to say, but there are one or two points in which I would like to see a

relaxation of the rules. In the first place, I would, after full inquiry and under due security, lend a workman money to redeem or buy his tools. It is false economy and wrong to provide for the maintenance of honest able-bodied men out of the rates. And if it is, as I think, wrong, the law should be altered, and the Board of Guardians should be able to do it. Charity is all very well, but it should not be allowed to undertake matters which are the duty of the State. The other direction in which I would see an improvement, and that I only mention, is the matter of pauper burial. I would have such a system as would allow every one, even the poorest, to pay for the funeral of those near and dear to him without those terrible privations which those who work among the poor know are so frequent, in order to prevent burial by the parish, and which add to separation of death a fresh pang in the humiliation of those left behind.

Let me turn to the second class whom I have said originally Poor Law affects, and that is the impotent. Now, just as the first class of able-bodied is subdivided into the vagrant and honest poor, so also the impotent may be divided as those whose work is done, and those whose work is to come. Let me at once dismiss the latter. We are promised to-morrow a paper on the subject by Mrs Browne, and I am sure it would be the wish and convenience of the Conference to postpone till then all treatment of that matter, and pass at once to the provision necessary for the aged, and advocate boldly and at once a scheme of old age pensions. My figures are not up to date. They are calculated on the basis of some few years ago. It will not, however, affect the conclusions. I shall ask you to apply the conditions of to-day, when the nation, if larger, is also proportionally richer, the proportion is the same. In the United Kingdom, with its million of simultaneous paupers, and its 38 millions of population, we find about 1,700,000 persons of sixty-five years of age, of whom about 325,000 are permanent paupers; and about 1,000,000 persons over seventy, of whom 250,000 are permanent paupers. Other statistics go to confirm this broad result.

In London, one person in every five will die in the workhouse, hospital, or lunatic asylum.

Considering that comparatively few of the deaths are those of children, it is probable that one in every four London adults will be driven into these refuges to die, and the proportion in the case of the "manual labour class" must of course be still larger.

At present we give a superannuation allowance to about 160,000 retired civil servants, military and naval officers and men, policemen, and postmen, &c. The system is being extended to Poor Law officers, to elementary school teachers and nurses. In all these cases the pension is given practically as a matter of right. It is granted in addition to whatever may have been saved by the recipient, and it carries with it no stigma of public disgrace. We also give what are virtually superannuation allowances to 250,000 aged paupers, besides workhouse accommodation to 75,000 more. In their case, the

pension is awarded as of grace, it is only awarded where there has been none of that thrift we spend so much of our time in extolling, and it is accompanied by public opprobrium and legal disqualification for the duties of citizenship.

The result in the case of the upper classes is to encourage thrift and saving to supplement the pension without the slightest demoralisation of character. The result in the second case, that of the lower classes, is absolutely to discourage thrift and saving, and to break down whatever character has survived the losing fight of life. For some reason which it would be hard to discover logically, we give only to the better educated man who has well performed his duty, however he may have lived, a pension without disgrace; but to the poorer, who has equally well performed his duty, with all clean and virtuous living not dissimilar, a pension to which is attached ignominy and shame.

If we do really intend to give pensions to our aged poor, as we now do, had we not better do so in such a way as to improve rather than to injure their character, and in a manner calculated to promote rather than to discourage their own efforts to provide for their old age?

This proposal, though it is essentially one for National Insurance, must not be confounded with the several schemes which bear that name. The poor of this country will never vote away the poor rate. No Government is at all likely to attempt to collect compulsory insurance premiums from men already supporting their trade unions and friendly societies, their benefit clubs and their building societies, and paying, moreover, a not inconsiderable poor rate. Nor is there any reason for any such collection. The expenditure and the revenue sides of the Budget ought economically to be kept distinct. *If aged pensions are desirable, let us have them.* When the funds come to be raised, let it be done according to the classic economic maxims of taxation. It is pretty clear that these maxims will yield no support to the imposition of what would be virtually a new poll-tax.

Some persons will be frightened at the cost of providing any widespread system of aged pensions. You must, however, remember that the proposal involves really no *new* expense to the community. The aged poor are in any case maintained at the cost of the able-bodied workers; and the substitution of pensions for Poor Law relief is merely a readjustment. It may be assumed that in the United Kingdom to-day there would be about 1,700,000 persons over sixty-five. Of these probably 150,000 already receive public pensions of one kind or another, and about 325,000 are in receipt of Poor Law relief, costing on an average £10. 10s. 10³/₄d. each annually.* What proportion of the others would be eligible for and would apply for a pension it is impossible to say.

If the pension were made payable at seventy years of age, only 2²/₃

* Registrar-General's Report, 1889, C—5846, pp. 2, 72, 94.

per cent. of the population would be alive to claim it, or just a million for the United Kingdom, of whom probably 250,000 are already paupers, and perhaps 100,000 public pensioners. The extra charge involved would, in this case, not exceed threepence in the pound on the Income Tax.

There is not much hope of appreciable reduction in these figures at any early date. We may for some time to come reckon on having to make constant public provision for the needs of a million people in receipt of relief, representing a pauper population of at least three millions. It accordingly behoves us to see that this collective provision is as far as possible prevented from having demoralising or other injurious effects. Collective provision, when not combined with collective control of industry, may easily become demoralising to character and detrimental to the best interests of the recipients; and against this danger we must jealously guard. But we need not deliberately add to the possible objective demoralisation of the collective provision an unnecessary subjective demoralisation due to public stigma or disgrace. We must depauperise our deserving paupers. The whole range of Poor Law experience up to 1834 appeared to show that public boards could not be trusted to discriminate between individual cases; and the cast-iron rigour of the New Poor Law was the inevitable result. What we have been learning since 1834 is that discrimination must be more and more exercised between classes of paupers, not between individual cases, and that any Poor Law reform must necessarily proceed on this basis.

We have hitherto been so impressed with the danger of increasing the number of the shiftless poor, that we have managed to exercise a degrading and demoralising effect on those persons, many times more numerous, whose poverty is their misfortune, not their fault. We must now try a bolder experiment in what is necessarily our great collective laboratory of individual character. The time has come for us to maintain not only the bare existence, but the respectability of the aged, infirm, and orphaned poor, rather than content ourselves with the mere repression of the idle rogue and vagabond, whom the existing social order has often demoralised beyond redemption.

The Poor Law Commissioners did not, in their great Report of 1834, recommend the withdrawal of outdoor relief from the aged or the infirm. The common impression that they advocated the total abolition of outdoor relief is incorrect. The whole drift of their conclusions is against any subsidy in aid of wages; but they did not regard collective provision for old age as any real allowance in aid of wages, in the sense of wages being likely to be higher if no such provision were made. Modern political economists cannot do otherwise than confirm this view.

No determined attempt has accordingly been made, except in London, Manchester, and a few other places, to abolish outdoor relief to the aged; and the statistics already quoted appear to prove

that at least one-fifth of the people who attain the age of sixty-five are compelled to resort to the relieving officer for that bare subsistence upon which they linger out their lives.

Nothing can be more discouraging to provident saving, even where it is possible, than our present practice in such cases. When a man is absolutely destitute we provide for him a bare subsistence. If he can manage to save, by the time he is sixty-five, as much as £150, he can provide for himself and wife practically as well as he and she would be provided for if they had saved nothing at all. Once past that minimum, there is every inducement to save which "gentility" and independence can offer. Anything short of that minimum is virtually useless. Poor Law relief cannot legally be given except to the absolutely destitute; and the aged domestic servant, or farm-labourer, who has accumulated £50 must dissipate that small hoard before his future is secure from want. The man who has a shilling a week from his friendly society is no better off than he who has nothing. Both must be just kept alive, and legally neither can demand more. Now the virtual minimum which enables an aged couple to dispense with Poor Law relief is far beyond the reach of a large proportion of the population.

It is nothing less than heartless hypocrisy and horrible cant on the part of you and me, of all of us here, to talk of thrift to those who, spending week by week all their money, scarce have enough to bring up their children as good citizens.

But besides and beyond all this, instead of encouraging those who can to save as much as they can towards their support, we do, in effect, discourage them by making them no better than those who save nothing at all.

Might it not be better after all to recognise frankly the provision of a minimum pension for old age as a collective charge, since every person must necessarily pay rates and taxes in one shape or another all his life long.

It would, I think, be only fair, allowing to all that bare pension very little above the present cost of maintenance in the workhouse, to interfere in no way in cases where money has been saved. It is only a difference in name or in sentiment, but such a change as those who receive it is the whole change in the world no less than that.

There is a further direction in which these public pensions would encourage individual effort and social sympathy. Nothing is more brutalising than the manner in which the grown-up children of paupers are virtually encouraged to treat their aged parents. The Guardians have the greatest possible difficulty in obtaining contributions from sons towards the maintenance of their pauper parents. The money is given grudgingly, *because it merely saves the rates*. But once let it become possible for the poor, as it is for the middle class and the rich, to soothe and comfort the declining years of their parents by those small gifts which cost so little and mean so much, and we may have at least a chance of awakening those filial feelings

which go far to humanise and elevate personal character. If a son's assistance to his State-pensioned father or mother means the addition of tobacco or tea to their bare subsistence, that assistance is a great deal more likely to be given than when it means merely the reduction of his parent's cost to the parish. At present we deliberately dry up and starve the higher feelings of the poor.

You will see that the general lines of development which I suggest are to give to the Board of Guardians more power—to separate the two chief functions which they are called to perform. The evils of 1834 are now generally done away with, and the inmates of our workhouses are a different class to that which the Commissioners were considering in 1834. Therefore we demand a corresponding change in the spirit of administration. The impotent largely preponderate, and to those who are there from age and illness I would allow more and more ease and pleasure, and happiness, and attention. There are workhouses where insufficient attention is paid to nursing. It is in such a matter that ladies can afford great assistance. You are the Guardians of the Poor and not the Guardians of the rates, and the honest poor seem to me to have an incontestable right to happiness in their old age, even at the expense of higher rates.

Gentlemen, the task which I set before myself is finished. I have tried to show you with all the imperfections of a theorist some of the changes I fain would see in the administration of the Poor Law.

I see a fatal difficulty in the task which is set before you of administering to the needs of two different classes under one set of rules. I see the ease with which under present regulations the deserving poor may be confounded with those who are more guilty than many criminals in our prisons. To the pulverised social atoms of our civilisation it is indeed difficult to administer in due proportion praise and blame. At least the Board of Guardians have shown themselves capable of dealing with the situation. I would ask for them greater freedom of administration, and less red tape. Let us separate the law which governs the deserving poor from that which governs the vagabond and worthless. It is a shame and discredit to nineteenth century civilisation that the same roof and the same penalties should cover both, and let us claim at least for the deserving lower classes the same privileges as we give the deserving rich. In the future of this land, if we are indeed to avoid the dangers and snares that must accompany prosperity and empire, it will only be by strict impartiality and justice between class and class, and by conferring on all who deserve well of their country that which they merit, and by enforcing on all who deserve nought the punishment they are entitled to.

Above all, care for the personal character of each; for as each man is good, so the nation is good; as each man is anxious for the right, so the nation strives against the wrong. Let us take particular care for each individual person. Let us at least claim that within our realm in this most glorious year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee,

those who are charged with the administration of the Poor Law are actuated only with the desire to know the right in order that they may do it. (Cheers.)

Mr G. E. LLOYD-BAKER (Hon. Sec.) said that if he had known that the Earl Beauchamp intended to make such an interesting speech, he would have been inclined to make it the sole topic of the day's discussion, but it was impossible, although the noble Lord's speech would doubtless be to some extent discussed during the Conference. (Hear, hear.)

The following paper was then read and discussed:—

THE PROGRESS OF THE POOR LAW DURING HER MAJESTY'S REIGN.

By J. MILSON RHODES, M.D., C.C.,

Chairman of the Chorlton Board of Guardians.

It is one of the strange coincidences of history that both our greatest Queens ascended the Throne when a corrupt administration of the Poor Law had resulted in the almost complete demoralisation of the democracy.

How great that demoralisation was is proved in the latter case by the statistics of the time.

No doubt the great Poor Law of 1834 had even by 1837 resulted in a large diminution of pauperism. The total number of paupers had fallen from 1,279,974, or 96 per 1,000, in 1831, to 1,134,165, or 75 per 1,000 of the population, in 1839, a reduction of no less than 145,809.* Last year 840,000.

The year of Her Majesty's accession is memorable for the small amount expended upon the relief of the poor. The total cost in 1837 was only £4,044,741, the smallest sum on record, except that of the second year of the century, when £26,000 less was expended.

The cost per head of population in 1801 was, however, much greater, the figures being 9s. 1d. for that year, and only 5s. 5d. for 1837, or very nearly

* "Pauperism : Its Nature and Extent," G. Howell.

the same amount per head that was expended in the West Midland Division last year, the exact figure being 5s. 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. The Poor Law statistics in the thirties were so little attended to that it is not possible to procure them for every year, as the complete figures are not in existence.

The following comparison of the cost in 1832 and 1895, the last return issued, may possibly be of interest as proving that the burden placed upon the shoulders of the ratepayers is not more grievous than it was in the first half of the century :—

County.	Rates Expended on the Poor.			Rate per Head on Estimated Population.		
	1832.	1841.	1895.	1832.	1841.	1895.
Gloucestershire	£ 173,000	£ 133,306	£ 97,009	8/11	6/2	6/4
Herefordshire	63,000	43,625	21,981	11/4	7/7	7/11
Shropshire	89,000	57,427	25,033	8/	4/10	4/10 $\frac{1}{2}$
Staffordshire	133,000	92,977	161,063	6/6	3/8	4/11 $\frac{3}{4}$
Warwickshire	168,000	100,458	97,884	10/	5/	5/5
Worcestershire	87,000	63,277	59,594	8/3	5/5	5/5 $\frac{1}{2}$

High as the amounts in column 4 appear to be, they were less than those for the agricultural counties generally, where the average rate levied on each head of the population amounted to no less than 12s. 4d.

The southern agricultural counties then occupied a more unpleasant pre-eminence in the cost of pauperism than they do now. At the time of which I write, 16s. 7d. was the average rate for that unfortunate district. The following are the figures for these

poverty-stricken counties, and it will be noticed that a very great change for the better so far as the rate-payers are concerned has taken place in all of them :—

County.	Average Rate Levied on each Head of the Population.		
	1832.	1841.	1895.
Berkshire	16/8	9/7	6/0 $\frac{3}{4}$
Dorsetshire	11/7	9/4	7/3
Essex	17/6	9/9	6/
Kent	15/2	7/7	6/3 $\frac{1}{2}$
Sussex	20/11	9/10	7/2 $\frac{1}{2}$
Wiltshire	16/7	10/7	7/4 $\frac{3}{4}$

If we have not arrived at uniformity in dealing with vagrants, we appear to be much nearer uniformity in our expenditure on the pauper than we were. From the examples just given it will be seen that whereas the difference between the highest and the lowest in the earlier year amounted to 9s. 4d., in the latter the maximum variation was only 1s. 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.

THE OLD ADMINISTRATION AND THE NEW LAW.

With such figures as those just quoted in relation to both pauperism and the taxation resulting therefrom, it was no wonder that it was universally felt that there was something rotten in the State as regards the way in which the Poor Law was administered. Even Thomas Carlyle in his fierce attack upon the new Poor Law in 1839* felt himself compelled to

* "Chartism," T. Carlyle.

praise it "as the probable preliminary of some general charge to be taken of the lowest classes by the higher. Any general charge whatsoever, rather than a conflict of charges, varying from parish to parish ; the emblem of darkness, of unreadable confusion. Supervisal by the Central Government in what spirit soever executed, is supervisal from a centre. Let us welcome the new Poor Law as the harsh beginning of much, the harsh ending of much. Most harsh and barren lies the new ploughers' fallowfield, the crude subsoil all turned up ; which never saw the sun, which as yet grows no herb, which has outdoor relief for no one. Yet patience, innumerable weeds and corruption lie safely turned down and extinguished under it ; by Heaven's blessing and the skyey influences, fruits that are good and blessed will yet come of it." Well might the Chelsea sage speak of weeds and corruption. As to the weeds being all safely turned down, that is another question ; but leaving that on one side, all students of this branch of economics must acknowledge that, looked at either from the standpoint of the ratepayers or the pauper, "good and blessed fruits" have come of it, harsh as in the beginning it doubtless appeared to be.

Demoralised as many of those who received the relief were, those who administered the relief were, if possible, more corrupt, and in many cases, no doubt, actually received more than did the paupers, though Gloucestershire appears to have been a bright exception. One of the Poor Law Commissioners in his Report states* "that he did not recollect of a single shilling having the appearance of peculation." This, however, was evidently the exception that proved the rule, for many of the counties are denounced for their evil doings.

Suffolk appears to have occupied a very unenviable place. "In Suffolk," writes the Commissioner, "the poor rates are enormously heavy, in some parishes 40s.

* Poor Law Commissioners' Reports.

per head, whole districts averaging 30s. per head on the population, every species of trickery is developed by examination, charges the most barefaced and inconsistent are submitted to by the farmers, and the office of overseer is generally filled by a much less respectable class of persons. In some of the Hundreds of Suffolk the entire Poor Law management is based in fraud, and supported by perjury and deception."

The Poor Law authorities in that county do not appear to have stinted themselves, as the tavern bills amounted to not less than £3,000 per annum on an expenditure of £279,000 for the whole county—in other words, more than 1 per cent. was expended on overseers' dinners.

FORMER WORKHOUSE ACCOMMODATION.

Extravagant and bad as the administration of the law was for the interests of the ratepayers, it was as regards the provision for the pauper if possible worse. We who live in happier times, and also under stricter supervision by the central authority, can hardly realise the conditions under which the paupers existed in some of the workhouses. A few extracts from official Reports may tend to prove that things are not quite so bad as they used to be, and as some people would like us to think they are now :—

"At one workhouse, a room 55 feet by 8 feet by 6 feet high, had found accommodation for 28 young men, 5 in a bed.

"In the young women's wards, 16 beds were considered sufficient for 64 young women to sleep in.

One of the dormitories situated over the wash-house was always damp and usually filled with steam. When I say that there was less than 100 cubic feet per head you can imagine the condition of things in this ward, which was occupied by women and children."

At the same workhouse the sick wards never exceeded 10 feet high, half of them being only 8 feet.

No wonder that they were, in the words of the Report, "close and foul."

Examples without end, some even worse than those I have just given, could easily be produced, but the details are often so sickening that I have not ventured to bring them forward. Proper sanitary arrangements appear to have been conspicuous by their absence. Would that we could think that insanitary workhouses were things of the past.

PAUPER CHILDREN.

One of the Reports "On the Education of Pauper Children" gives only too conclusive proof of the moral degradation of the pauper classes of the time. From a return giving the reason why 1,847 children were upon the rates, I find, to quote the words of the Report—

Bastards,	-	-	-	-	-	-	543
Children deserted by father,	-	-	-	-	-	-	279
Children deserted by both father and mother,	-	-	-	-	-	-	54
Children of convicted parents,	-	-	-	-	-	-	171
							1,047

proving that more than 50 per cent. were there as the result of immorality and crime.

As we all know, crime and ignorance always travel together, and the following official return published in the forties throws a lurid light upon the state of education of the children from nine to sixteen years of age under the care of the Guardians :—

	Youths.	Girls.
Who can read well, - - -	206	173
Who can read imperfectly, -	217	207
Who cannot read, - - -	62	38
Who can write well, - - -	122	47
Who can write imperfectly, -	138	97
Who cannot write, - - -	211	262

There is no reason to be surprised at these figures, for paupers hardly able to read or write themselves were by no means unknown in the capacity of schoolmasters.

PAUPERISM AND EDUCATION.

The adult paupers were, of course, in a still greater depth of ignorance. From statistics published about the same time, it appears that out of 2,725 adult paupers only 14 could read and write well, and no less than 1,402 were entirely ignorant of the most elementary knowledge of reading and writing; the rest are supposed to have had more or less, principally less, of one or the other.

It was well said by the Bishop of Chester (Dr Sumner) that "of all obstacles to improvement ignorance is the most formidable, because the only true secret of assisting the poor is to make them agents in bettering their own condition, and to supply them not with a temporary stimulus, but with a permanent energy. As fast as the standard of intelligence is raised, the poor become more and more able to co-operate in any plan proposed for their advantage, and more likely to listen to any reasonable suggestion, and more able to understand, and therefore more willing to pursue it. Hence it follows, that when gross ignorance is once removed, and right principles are introduced, a great advantage has been already gained against squalid poverty. Many avenues to an improved condition are opened to one whose faculties are enlarged and exercised; he sees his own interests more clearly, he pursues it more steadily, and he does not study immediate gratification at the expense of bitter and late repentance. Indigence, therefore, will rarely be found in company with good education." *

It would almost appear that when Dr Sumner wrote those words that he had seen the future statistics of pauperism and education as in a vision, because we know that, as the number of those so ignorant of elementary education as to be unable to sign the

* "Records of Creation," Dr Sumner. Quoted in Porter's "Progress of the Nation."

marriage register has decreased, in a corresponding ratio the number of paupers has diminished, therefore, so far as pauperism is concerned, there is a credit side to the cost of education, and I believe that the balance on the credit side will rapidly increase as the years roll on.

IGNORANCE OF ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES.

Gross as the ignorance of the people was as regards elementary education, it was still greater as to the economic causes of poverty, especially the objective causes, and this want of knowledge frequently resulted in riots, often accompanied by rick-burning and other outrages, in which not only the property but the lives of the Guardians were placed in jeopardy.

The old Chartist riots in 1842 caused, as some can remember, great disturbances in the country. In the next union to my own—Stockport—the workhouse was attacked by an army of Chartists numbering 30,000. The windows and doors were shattered, and the whole of the food cleared out and distributed among the crowd.

The case just quoted is one of many examples of the difficulties under which the Guardians at that time discharged their duties—arduous duties would be no inaccurate term, as they frequently had to sit from early morning until eight or nine at night. At the time we are speaking of, the Poor Law Commissioners absolutely refused to allow reporters to be present at the meetings of the Guardians on account of the personal danger that might result to members of the Boards who had refused relief to improper cases. There are many who altogether condemn the Guardians of the past—and no doubt there is much that they might have done that was neglected—but we must remember that their predecessors had done little else but evil, and that continually. And we must not forget also that they dealt with a state of affairs totally different

from that existing to-day. The year after the potato famine no less than 1,871,541 persons were paupers, or nearly 11 per cent. of the population (10.8 is the exact figure).^{*} Last year the number was 840,456 of all classes ; 229,552 in, 610,735 out.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROGRESS.

Still progress was being made. The establishment of the workhouse school was an improvement upon no school at all, and this was followed by a still greater one—the district school. I am no advocate of barrack schools. No Guardian would propose to build them now. But I do not think that any Guardian, with an unprejudiced mind, will believe that they are the abomination of desolation that a certain Committee tried to make out. Some of these schools have done excellent work. Probably it is not of so much consequence what the system is under which the children are educated as how the system is carried out. At the Swinton Schools, belonging to the Manchester Board, built fifty years ago on the barrack system, the Medical Inspector of the Local Government Board, on his visit last month, found “no cases of acute ophthalmia.” Seven hundred children are in those schools, but neither Mr Guilmette, the Superintendent of Relief, or Major Ballantyne, the Master of the Manchester Workhouse, can find evidence of a Swinton boy, grown to healthy manhood, having become an inmate of the workhouse.

Good as the work was that the Guardians did when they removed the children from the workhouse to separate schools—so removing the children from the tainted moral atmosphere that must be, from the very nature of things, more or less associated with the workhouse—still better work was done by the Birmingham Board, when in 1878 they set an example to

^{*} “ Pauperism : Its Nature and Extent,” G. Howell.

other Boards by building the Marston Green Homes. Since that time other Boards have improved upon those schools, as they will no doubt in the future improve upon the Chorlton Guardians' New Schools ; but none the less is the credit due to the Birmingham Board for the courage with which they made the experiment which has had such excellent results, not only for the children under their care, but for thousands of other children also, because they got rid not only of the pauper uniform, but also the system of serving the same quantity of food to each child, regardless of its having a good or bad appetite, and also by providing a proper playing-field—playing-field, please, not playground—proved that they understood the truth of the old saying, that “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”—an old saw that ought to be borne in mind by all those who are responsible for the care of pauper children. Great as the improvement has been in the treatment of the children, probably it has been more rapid in the treatment of the sick poor, and I am glad to think that the ratio of progress is increasing year by year. I do not say that all Boards have done their duty in making proper provision for their sick poor ; there are some which, in spite of the remonstrances of the Inspectors of the Local Government Board, have sick wards that are the reverse of creditable either to their hearts or their heads. In my opinion, those mis-called Guardians deserve the strongest possible condemnation, not only because those Boards who do their duty by the sick poor have too often to share the disgrace and odium with those who do not, but because we are elected by the ratepayers to make proper provision for the poor. Hence our title ; and in neglecting that duty, we are betraying our trust. Both buildings and nursing have, however, been enormously improved. With pavilion hospitals all over the country, it is difficult to believe that it is less than thirty years since the first Union Hospital on that system was built at Chorlton.

WORKHOUSE NURSING.

Great as the improvement in the buildings, it has been still greater in the nursing, though here there is much still to be desired. Strange to say the revolution in workhouse nursing was not caused by the Local Government Board or the medical profession—it was due to Mr Rathbone of Liverpool. An attack of typhoid fever drew his attention to the value of trained nurses, and it was entirely owing to his generosity that the experiment of employing trained nurses was made at the Brounlow Hill Hospital at Liverpool, and no experiment ever had more far-reaching or beneficent results to all concerned.

It was not only that the patients were infinitely better cared for as regards nursing, and therefore, in the acute cases, at any rate, more quickly cured—so saving the rates—but the moral atmosphere of the sick wards was quite as much improved. Only those who, like myself, have had to inquire into workhouse nursing can form any idea what pauper nursing means. As you know, pauper nurses, if young, are rarely there for their virtues, and if old, are totally unfit for the hard work of nursing. Of course I am quite aware that the number of nurses employed is in many cases at the present time utterly inadequate for the work required, but even if too few in number, as they frequently are, there is no doubt that the mere presence of a properly trained nurse has made far happier the lives of those respectable people who through misfortune have had to seek shelter in our sick wards.

The Lancashire Guardians are entitled to some credit for the liberal manner in which they employ trained nurses. At the present time in the County Palatine 549 trained nurses are employed in our workhouse sick wards to look after 8,796 cases. In making that calculation I have left out 34 paid but untrained attendants, though I ought to say that I have seen very good work done at one hospital by this class.

So at present we have 1 trained nurse to every 16 patients. It may help the public to realise the improvement that has taken place when I say that in Mr Jenner Just's District, comprising about 40 Unions, no less than 126 additional nurses have been added to the various staffs during the last three years.

In the West Midland Division the numbers are—

Sick and Bedridden.	Aged and Infirm.	Paid Nurses.
3,461	1,891	268

or 1 paid officer to about 20 beds, a great improvement on 1890, when it was 1 paid officer to 26 beds. There is one class in our workhouses that has not shared to so great an extent as some of us would like in the improvements that have been made—viz., those suffering from mental diseases.

PROVISION FOR THE MENTALLY AFFLICTED.

Do we always realise how numerous this unfortunate class is? Lancashire alone has 2,751 in special workhouse wards. No doubt something has been done in many workhouses to brighten their wards—pictures, plants, bright floor rugs and tablecloths, arm-chairs, Japanese fans, pianos, billiards, are all more or less used. Better still for the patients is the fact that all good unions now employ trained attendants instead of relying solely upon those failures of society, pauper attendants.

In the future provision for this class of cases will be made by the combination of Unions, and the result will doubtless be beneficial both to the ratepayers and the patients. In advocating this plan, I am only preaching what my Union is practising, for we have combined with Manchester to make full and proper provision for them, and I trust the Guardians* of Birmingham will have as little difficulty as we have had in arranging terms with their neighbours for the feeble-minded and epileptic children.

It is one of the blackest spots in our history—

* Report of Birmingham Board on Accommodation for Idiots.

black as some of our records are—that with the exception of the Darenth Asylum, which only takes London cases, no provision whatever is made for the epileptic idiot.

In Lancashire the Asylums Board is making some provision for this class, and probably the solution will be to hand them over to the County Council in the thinly-populated districts, for such provision will no doubt cost money, for we are no longer of the opinion held in the first half of the century “that old jails required* but little alteration to make them fit receptacles for the insane.”

Very little need be said as to the blind and deaf and dumb if capable of education, for we all, I hope, deal with them by sending them to proper institutions for their training with the best results.

I should like to have said something on the good done by the Brabazon scheme, the flower missions, and other associations having for their object the prevention of that moral stagnation and degradation that was in the past typical of the workhouse, but the paper has already run to greater lengths than the writer intended.

THE BEST ADMINISTRATION IN EUROPE.

I have endeavoured to show that though an enormous amount of work remains to be done, yet the progress made in improving the administration of the Poor Law has been by no means so slow as some would have you believe.

The Guardians, in conjunction with the Local Government Board, have, at any rate, made our Poor Law administration the best in Europe. I have used the words, in conjunction with the Local Government Board, because critic of the Local Government Board as I am, it is bare justice to acknowledge that a very large share of the progress that has been made would never have been effected without the information collected

* “The Insane in Foreign Countries.”

by the office, and supplied to the various Boards by their inspectors; and personally I am glad to have this opportunity of acknowledging the help which I have so often and so courteously received at their hands.

In bringing before you the alteration for the better that has been made in treatment of the poor during her Majesty's reign, the writer has had no intention of even suggesting that the time has come when we can look upon our work as anything approaching completion. We must bear in mind that

“New occasions teach new duties,
Time makes ancient good uncouth;” *

and provision for the poor that corresponded with the mental and physical condition of the people fifty years ago is now condemned by universal public opinion as utterly inadequate.

In conclusion, let me hope that I have suggested subjects for useful discussion. Of one thing there can be no doubt in any impartial mind, that an enormous amount of good work has been accomplished during the last sixty years by her Majesty's servants, the Guardians.

That we have failed to accomplish all our desires we know only too well; but looking at what has been done, there is no reason to lose heart or hope; though, as Arthur Toynbee said, there are times “when, as we move in the chill and tedious round of daily work, this hope will sometimes seem to us a dream. History will grow dim, faith will die. Yet let us remember that there never was a time when we had so much cause for hope.” †

The very name of workhouse is becoming a souvenir, for the strong, able-bodied pauper is diminishing year by year; and the day is not far distant when the workhouse of the past will be replaced by the hospital, the almshouse, and the school.

* Whittier.

† “Industry and Democracy,” A. Toynbee.

DISCUSSION.

Mr J. BRINTON (Kidderminster) adverted for a moment to the Chairman's speech, and said he hoped that his Lordship might find time to devote some attention to Poor Law questions. He was very much obliged to Mr Rhodes for his reference to the improvements in Poor Law administration. First of all, he would mention the great advances in the last ten or fifteen years in infirmary management. Twenty-five or thirty years ago the infirmaries were a disgrace to civilisation. It was not too much to say so. He was of opinion that they should never have in their workhouses other than trained certificated nurses, a good medical staff, and all the pharmacopœia and surgical attendance second to none. They must all feel that there had been improvement in the treatment of workhouse children, not only in the sense of taking them out of barrack schools, but in placing the children out of touch with the workhouse, and sending them to the local elementary schools. They had given the children who had any energy an opportunity of getting on, and of forgetting the taint of pauperism. But the difficulties which the Local Government Board had put in the way of Guardians had been no small hindrance to them. Still they were getting over those difficulties gradually, and if those responsible for the local elementary schools would be a little less particular, and would endeavour to smooth down the difficulties which occasionally arose as to other children mixing with the workhouse children, further advances might then be made in this most desirable direction. As to nursing, he had felt very strongly that they did not take advantage of the powers conferred upon them for the provision of outdoor nurses. Every Guardian knew the value of indoor nursing which was now given to Poor Law patients, and he did think that equal advantages should be afforded to the outdoor patients. The outdoor nurses supplied a want which could not be met in any other way, and he (the speaker) was as strong as ever in his advocacy of them. There are many paupers who could not be removed to the workhouse infirmaries. He hoped his opinion on the question would be discussed by the meeting—in fact, he hoped that on a future occasion the Conference would have a paper on the subject. With regard to the question of the hour—the pension question—he felt that it was in suspense at the present moment. Mr Chamberlain had not been able to redeem his promise. But this the Guardians might do, whether they had a pension scheme or not, they might classify the adult inmates of the workhouses, and in this way they might do a great deal to ameliorate the condition of inmates, and so get rid of the vast expense which would be entailed by a pension scheme. They might with great advantage reclassify the adult inmates, and give the well-behaved superior diet, a few more comforts, and more freedom about going out.

Mr W. CHANCE (Hon. Sec., Central Poor Law Conferences) said he came to the meeting specially to hear Dr Rhodes' paper, and

he thought that they might all congratulate themselves upon having had a most excellent one. Lord Beauchamp, in his opening address, brought in a great deal of debatable matter, and he would be glad if the noble Lord would give a paper at one of the Conferences on the question of old age pensions. There might be a very good answer to many of the points raised by the Chairman. The Chancellor of the Exchequer the other day, in reviewing the progress of the nation during the last sixty years, did not mention the Poor Law, but the figures given by Mr Rhodes were of the most startling character. People scarcely appreciate the fact that the number of paupers had been reduced from 62.7 to 26.8 per thousand of population since 1849. He had compared the *per mille* of pauperism and expenditure on relief in the six counties in the West Midland Division with that in the rest of England, excluding London. The figures were 29, and 5s. 6½d. for the latter; and 29.2, and 5s. 5¾d. for the former. But when he came to examine the figures for the six counties he found startling differences. Why was the pauperism of Herefordshire double that of Warwick and Salop? And why was there such a difference between that of Worcestershire and Herefordshire, which were only separated by the Malvern Hills? He hoped some delegate would be able to explain the matter. He thought it must be owing to administration, and a laxer system of outdoor relief. If so, Herefordshire did not gain by that policy, because its expenditure on relief per head of population was considerably greater than that of the other counties. Indeed, the county occupied a very unenviable position among all the others in England and Wales, only two other counties, Norfolk and Dorset, having a larger amount of pauperism. He hoped that the Herefordshire Guardians would look into the matter.* The English Poor Law was much attacked, but he ventured to say that no other system could show better results.

He believed in the English workhouse system. He believed also that there was no country in the world where the poor were better treated than in this country. He ventured to say that the English

* Mr Chance has sent us the tables of figures which he had before him when he spoke. They are as follows:—

County.	Ratio per 1,000 of Estimated Population.			Rate per Head on Estimated Population.		Total Expenditure on Relief.
	Indoor.	Outdoor.	Total.	In-Maintenance.	Outdoor Relief.	
				s. d.	s. d.	s. d.
Warwick -	7.6	13.6	21.2	1 2¼	0 11½	5 5
Salop -	7.5	14.3	21.8	1 2¼	0 9¾	4 10½
Stafford -	6.6	25.2	31.8	1 0¾	1 9¼	4 11¾
Worcester -	6.5	25.4	31.9	1 0¼	1 8½	5 5½
Gloucester -	7.6	27.2	34.8	1 2½	2 3¼	6 4
Hereford -	7.0	34.5	41.5	1 1½	2 9½	7 11

pauper was vastly better off than even under the Elberfeld system which he had seen at work at Dresden. They might go on improving the workhouses, and this could be effected without incurring much additional expense. Life in a workhouse was very much better than inadequate relief outside it. There was a danger nowadays of mixing up poverty and destitution. They could only get rid of poverty by reducing pauperism, and by inducing people not to look upon themselves as bound to become dependent upon the rates. Whoever was there fifty years hence would doubtless see that a further reduction had been made in pauperism. Sir Baldwin Leighton had shown them in the Atcham Union (which was included in the District) how to reduce pauperism. Let them take a lesson from the experience of that Union.

Rev. W. M. KINGSMILL (Droitwich) said that the Chairman's speech was contentious in the extreme, and he (the speaker) was very sorry that the Chairman had done his best to intensify the feeling, which he believed was a most improper feeling, that relief from the rates was a disgrace. The poor paid the rates, and when they went on the rates they were merely receiving what they had paid for. If there was any disgrace in receiving such relief, there would be equally disgrace in receiving an old age pension, which stood on exactly the same footing. Guardians on the whole had done their best for the poor for many years. If they had been a little behindhand in regard to the provision of trained nursing staffs, why should they be blamed for not providing what the rich themselves had not received until quite lately.

Mr ROBERTS (Shipston-on-Stour) remarked that the poor not only paid rates, but were, as a class, among the largest taxpayers.

Mr MURRAY BROWNE (Local Government Board Inspector) said that he thought the paper which had been read was encouraging in many ways, showing that a vast deal of progress had been made. The reader had enforced upon them this lesson, that because a great deal had been done in the past, that was not a reason why nothing should be done in the future, but rather that they should do more than they had done. The really important thing was for each individual Board of Guardians and each individual Guardian to do anything which struck them as the proper thing. There were two directions in which improvement might be made, both of them concerning classification. There was classification within the workhouses, and there might be also classification of workhouses, that is, different workhouses or buildings might be set apart for the accommodation of various classes of paupers. Both those questions had been discussed there before, and were too large to be reopened there that day. Neither of them need involve any very heavy expense. Classification of inmates had not been expensive in the Unions in the Home District where it had been tried, while classification of workhouses might by co-operation among the Unions lead to a diminution of expenditure. Still, he wished to

impress upon them that they could not make improvements without expense, and that when expenditure was judicious and had been carefully considered they ought not to shrink from it. It was a very great pity they could not get all the Boards of Guardians to attend the Conference. Some Boards never sent a representative. As a rule those Boards that were already doing good work were represented. The paper might have shown Lord Beauchamp that things were not so bad as they seemed to be. At the same time, he was satisfied that a great deal was yet to be said about old age pensions, of which his Lordship had spoken. As to Outdoor Nursing, it was quite true that there was an order of the Local Government Board issued some years ago empowering Boards of Guardians to employ outdoor nurses, but he knew of no case where they had been employed, probably because it was found cheaper and more convenient to subscribe to nursing associations. Lastly, as to Poor Law children, he really thought they were very fairly treated, and the result of the system was satisfactory. A number of cases were known to him where children brought up in workhouses were occupying important and prominent positions. One of the most eminent men in England at the present day began life as a workhouse boy. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. H. H. HUFFADINE (Cannock) said it was something to be thankful for that the Local Government Board were taking up a more favourable position on these questions. The *personnel* of the Unions was also improving. Many of the faults of the past were owing to the incompetence or carelessness of Guardians. (No, no.) He hoped that they would now witness the beginning of a better day for deserving people who had become poor through no fault of their own.

Mr G. ALLCHURCH (Coventry) said that he almost wished that day that he had been a Guardian for the last twenty or thirty years, as the veterans must feel very proud of all the improvement that had taken place during that period. In considering the causes of that improvement regard must be had to the work of the Friendly Societies. Previous to the Poor Law of 1834 there was every inducement to pauperism. It was at that time far better to be a pauper and work for the parish than to be a small ratepayer, but immediately the Poor Law reform commenced the good work of the Friendly Societies began, and pauperism decreased. They insisted that there was no stigma in pauperism at the present day, but did they not often use to applicants for "the House" an argument which showed that they thought there was a stigma in it?

Rev. H. DENING (Barton Regis Union) said he was glad to hear Mr Murray Browne say they were all members of good Boards. (Hear, hear.) With regard to one point in the paper, he might say they had in his Union the greatest difficulty to get married couples to live together—he did not wish to discourage any young bachelors—(laughter)—but what they said was, "I have seen enough of the

old 'un, and if I can see him once a week that's all I want now." (Laughter.) As to Outdoor Nursing, his Board paid about a penny per visit per pauper in the form of a contribution of fifty guineas per annum to the Private Nursing Association at Clifton.

Mr W. KIRK (Coventry) said that Mr Rhodes had spoken of the epileptic idiot. Nothing had pained him more than females of this class who had left Unions and returned not once nor twice, but three or four times with illegitimate children. What could the Guardians do with them?

Mr W. JONES (Bristol) said they must move one step at a time, and he would like to say what his Board had done with the children lately. About a year ago they sent the boys to the public elementary schools, and he was pleased to say that the boys had been spoken of in the very highest terms, their conduct had been excellent, and there had been no complaint whatever. The Guardians were highly gratified at the success of the experiment. (Hear, hear.) Until they could get children away from the workhouses altogether, he would recommend Guardians to consider whether it would not be well to send the children to the local elementary schools. With regard to classification, until they could reach this most desirable end, would it not be well for them to try the plan of allowing the respectable people more leave. It tended to brighten their lives, and to make them more amenable to discipline.

Mr G. E. LLOYD-BAKER (Hon. Sec.) said that Dr Rhodes had shown them that there had been a great improvement in recent years. The establishment of Benefit Societies had had a great deal to do with it; but they must not lose sight of the fact that the material prosperity of the country had greatly increased in the same period. He was one of those who believed that the strict administration of relief tended to the success of the Friendly Societies. If Guardians did the right thing they might still further reduce poverty. It was in every way more possible now for poor men to make headway and get to the front. All who attended those Conferences had but one object in view, the amelioration of the condition of the poor. Formerly they used to think more how to alleviate the sufferings of the poor, now it was how to prevent poverty that engaged their attention. (Hear, hear.)

Mr STEPHEN GATELEY (Birmingham) said the Birmingham Guardians, of whom he was the Vice-Chairman, were very pleased with the work they had already done in the direction of establishing Training Homes for the children, and they did not intend to stand still, for even now they were establishing a laundry where the heavier things could be washed, so that the smaller things might continue to be washed by the children in the Homes. They had at the present time something like 320 or 325 children in the homes, whereas two years ago the numbers were 420 or 430. There had, therefore, been a decrease of about 25 per cent., which they attributed to better times. (Hear, hear.) Last year with one of his colleagues

he visited in various parts of the country the children who had left the Homes. He was pleased to say that quite 95 per cent. of the boys were doing well, and many of them had the prospect of attaining an excellent position in the world. (Hear, hear.) As to Outdoor Nursing, they had, of course, received the order of the Local Government Board, but they found that they could not do better than subscribe to the Birmingham District Nursing Society, which did all that could be wished for.

Mr W. GILBERT (Warwick) wished as an old Guardian of over twenty years' standing to say that in his experience there had been a great reduction of pauperism, mainly owing to elementary education. The Friendly Societies deserved the highest praise for what they had done, having been the means of preventing a great many people from seeking poor relief. The next thing was the vast improvement in the sanitary condition of the cottages. They must not forget, too, that there had been a very great deal of emigration, and that thousands had gone away in search of work in other countries when they could not have got it at home. If the progress indicated by Dr Rhodes continued, there would soon be no work-houses at all. (Hear, hear.)

Mr F. THOMPSON (Burton-on-Trent) said that there were at the same time standing in his town three generations of workhouses: the old one—he knew not how old—one built about 1836, and one finished in 1884. The oldest was of such a nature that five years ago it was condemned as unfit for a common stable. When a building like that was used for human beings they could not be surprised at the statistics. The second one was used for some time as an infectious hospital, and then pulled down. The third was up to modern requirements. Dr Rhodes said that with the exception of the Darenth Asylum, which only took London cases, no provision whatever was made for the young pauper epileptic idiot. It was the weakest spot in the Poor Law of to-day. Many of the young epileptic paupers might be saved from a life of misery if they were trained and taught in time. (Hear, hear.) He appealed to all the Boards of Guardian in the West Midland District to help in the matter. They might do much to prevent these poor children from becoming permanent paupers. He asked them if they could not help in removing this blackest of spots.

Dr RHODES, replying, said that the Chairman spoke of the tramp and the moral infection of the tramp. It was a very serious question, but there was also a pounds, shillings, and pence question about the tramp, for the outbreaks of smallpox all over the country were due to the tramp. Tramps were not the unemployed, in the vast majority of cases they were the unemployable. (Hear, hear.) He hoped that the time was fast approaching when only thoroughly trained nurses would be employed, and that they would have to pass an examination by proper authorities to see that they were competent for the work they proposed to do. With regard to the objections

said to be raised to the children attending the public elementary schools, he thought there would be very little objection if the children were dressed like other children, if they were the most regular attendants, and always had their fees ready. It was not only the decrease in the number of paupers that he looked upon as a happy thing, but the change in the character of the paupers. Those able to work were disappearing, and the workhouses were becoming hospitals and schools. Where they had coal there was least pauperism; and where there was a low rate of wages there was a high rate of outdoor relief. Which was cause and which was effect he could not say. Classification was a very difficult question. Every experienced Guardian knew that some of the best behaved inmates were the worst behaved outside. To employ trained nurses was much the more economical plan in the end, the patients were so much more rapidly cured. There had been many alterations of the law of late years. The alteration allowing them to give children what quantity of food they required was a very great alteration for the better, because the system of giving the children a certain amount of food per day, whether they wanted it or not, was a most pernicious system, tending to waste in after life. As to young epileptic females, his opinion was that they ought to be able to make thoroughly good provision for them. Only when such provision had been made for these young women would Guardians be justified in detaining them compulsorily, and preventing them from adding new burdens to the State. They must educate the poor in every way, mentally, morally, and physically, and in matters of decency. They wanted stricter action on the part of local authorities in relation to insanitary areas, and they might in this way help to keep down drunkenness. He could not agree with Mr Gilbert that emigration had been a means of reducing pauperism. It was not the paupers who emigrated, they had not the courage to emigrate. It was a very much better class. The pauper remained in this country, and became the hard bargain of the State. (Hear, hear.)

The meeting was then adjourned.

TUESDAY, 4TH MAY 1897.

Mr G. E. LLOYD-BAKER (Hon. Sec.) gave a short statement of the financial affairs of the Conference, showing that there was a satisfactory balance in hand.

Mr W. CHANCE (Hon. Sec., Central Conference) said that the arrangement that had been made with the well-known firm of Messrs P. S. King & Son, of King Street, Westminster, for the future reporting of the Poor Law Conferences would obviate any such regrettable delay as had occurred in the past. On his suggestion,

Mr J. J. SIMPSON (Bristol) moved, and it was unanimously resolved, That in the opinion of the Conference it was very desirable that the order of the Local Government Board restricting the number of Guardians at the Central Conference should be amended, and that not less than two Guardians and the Clerk should be allowed to represent each Board, irrespective of distance, at the Central Conference, and that each Union be requested to send to the Local Government Board a resolution to this effect.

The following Paper was then read and discussed :—

THE MANAGEMENT OF POOR LAW CHILDREN.

BY MRS W. R. BROWNE,

Guardian of the Poor, Worcester Union.

[Mrs W. R. BROWNE, who had prepared the following Paper, having unfortunately met with an accident, was unable to attend the meeting. The Hon. Sec., Mr Lloyd-Baker, therefore read the Paper, as follows :—]

DR RHODES has told us of the progress of the Poor Law during the reign of the Queen. Mine is the humbler task of indicating some points in that progress where, as it seems to me, administration is still defective.

The progress, as a whole, has been extraordinary. The Poor Law Administration has had its full share in the amelioration found necessary nowadays in order to make life endurable. To live as labourers or paupers (and under the old Poor Law the character was somewhat mixed !) lived sixty years ago could not now be faced. We are certainly, all of us, much more

comfortable than we were. It is to be hoped we are happier, but that is another matter. To reduce physical discomfort to a minimum may be called the guiding principle of modern life—a principle due to many causes, but, in its less worthy aspects, born, I fancy, of a misgiving in the minds of those who, surrounded by luxury, feel vaguely that they ought to share their good things with others. This feeling, instead of leading to personal renunciation, finds vent for itself in a cry for comparative comfort to be supplied to every one who is supposed to be uncomfortable, at the expense of somebody else! Under the influence of this feeling, and in the main greatly for the better, conditions of life in the Workhouse have been so much improved that the aged and infirm are beginning to look with less horror on “the House,” and thus their quarters are always full. Where, a few years ago, ten to fifteen old people were to be found, there are now twenty to thirty. In order to encourage aged persons to use the Workhouse accommodation, Guardians are making strenuous effort to effect some kind of classification, which shall remove the main objection felt by the respectable to accepting their hospitality.

While this far less urgent claim is receiving attention, the infinitely more important point of the classification of children is ignored. The children are everywhere an object of interest and attention, but it may be doubted whether this interest and attention are as intelligent as they might be.

Workhouse Schools are everywhere diminishing; the Free Education Act encouraged Guardians to send their children to the Elementary Schools. Pressure on the space for adult paupers causes separate buildings, either blocks or homes, to be erected for them. Good food and good clothing are provided. Sunday School also, with regular attention from the Chaplain, and periodical visits from the Doctor, concluding with a

fair supply of treats, and what more can a child want? This seems to be the attitude of a careful Board of Guardians towards their children. If the child fails to respond to these efforts and is unruly at home, and unsatisfactory when placed out, it alone is held to blame.

And yet I venture to say that a child needs very much more than this attention to its bodily wants. Each child has its own individuality, and unless that individuality is wisely watched and loved, no amount of material care will make it develop aright. If this is true of a child living with its parents, or in a voluntary home, it is true ten times over of children under the care of the Poor Law, for into the care of the Poor Law drift all those children whom nobody else will entertain, and there they are received, to settle themselves as best they may under excellent material conditions, under superintendence more or less skilful, but certainly scant, and surrounded by a moral chaos such as is to be expected in the children of the refuse of humanity.

I suppose it is because Guardians are essentially amateurs in the administration of the Poor Law and the care of children, that they enter upon this stupendous task with such extraordinary confidence and lightheartedness! No body of voluntary workers would face it for a moment. They would at once, if compelled to deal with it, cast about for the best methods of subdivision and classification, and call upon their neighbours to help them. We Guardians do no such thing. On the contrary, we are quite certain we have nothing to learn from any body, and that, whatever the difficulties may be, a plentiful supply of bricks and mortar and a small supply of officers will meet them completely.

Let us consider a moment the nature of the work required of a Poor Law school. Is it not that of six separate and universally recognised orders of schools?

(1) The Orphanage ; (2) The Voluntary Industrial School ; (3) The Certified Industrial School ; (4) The Truant School ; (5) The Reformatory School ; and (6) The School for Depraved Children. To these may be added epileptics, imbeciles, and remand children. And as if this were not enough, we are pestered in our efforts by incursions from vagrant and “revolving” children—children themselves only fit for classes 4, 5, and 6, while their wretched parents, if they had their deserts, would pass the greater part of their lives in Her Majesty’s keeping.

As yet, however, the law is very tender of the liberty of these parasites and very tender of their parental rights. Therefore they retain the power to prey at their inclination on society either as paupers or as beggars, and bring up their miserable children to do likewise. This is bad enough and sad enough, but the evil does not stop here. Whenever they see fit, they drop in “self and family” to their own Workhouse, and whilst enjoying a little rest and refreshment, send their unhappy children down to the Schools or Homes veritable missionaries of evil.

In small Unions it is difficult to see how this is to be prevented, but in the large ones where they have probationary schools the remedy is at hand. Why should the children of “revolvers” ever be allowed to go to the Homes of the permanent children at all ? It would seem worth while extending the accommodation at the school so as to deal with all cases of children whom it is known will not be with us more than three months continuously.

The discipline of the school should be strict, and the extra officer should not be grudged. Expenditure here will enable the work of the Permanent School to be more effectually done with less harass to the officers and less disorganisation of the children. There is another class I would keep at the Temporary School, viz., the children, now so numerous, sent to the Work-

house while their parents are imprisoned for cruelty or neglect. These children are not generally an acquisition, and if the sentence does not exceed three months, I should not, as a rule, let them enter the Permanent School. During the time of probation a very definite exchange of views should take place between the Board and the Local Representatives of the N.S.P.C.C. or the police, as the case may be, as to the desirability of putting the Adoption Act in force. It may be that those who have seen the parents consider that the warning and subsequent watching will be sufficient. If so, a wrong would be done to all parties, ratepayers included, by retaining the children. But sometimes, where there is only an idle brutal father, it may be better to keep the children and *make him pay*—pay as much as can be charged him, and then deal with his unfortunate children for their good.

This brings me to co-operation, a point on which I must ask permission to make a short digression.

We shall never do our work as well as it might be done until we recognise the work of voluntary agencies, and work with them freely and ungrudgingly. Voluntary work is far too important a factor in English life to be ignored. Thus all cases of “ins-and-outs” with children should be brought to the notice of the children’s inspector each time they go out, with any hints which may have been dropped as to their probable line of travel.

Out-relief lists and information as to sick and aged persons should be regularly supplied to the Local Charity Organisation Society, and I do not think it would be asking too much of Guardians of the Poor if, at least after each call over, the Guardian for the parish furnished the Vicar with a copy of the revised “Out-relief” list. Otherwise he is dependent on what the recipients may or may not tell him, and surely both he and the Guardians are entitled to a more trustworthy knowledge of each other than is to be

derived from such a source. Other agencies will suggest themselves to representatives from different Unions.

Surely it is desirable that the body legally entrusted with the relief of destitution should be on very friendly terms with all those who try to mitigate poverty. Their lines are not the same, but they cross each other too often to risk collision and the consequent upset of the work both feel to be so important. Of the prison authorities, and especially of the police, the same may be said, while there should be a clear understanding that no remand children be sent to the Workhouse without the charges against them being very clearly specified. I have known great wrong done to the permanent children for want of this.

To return. I have no new scheme to propound and no old one to exalt or to abuse. All schemes have done good work—all have done bad work. In dealing with children, persons are infinitely more important than systems. A badly constructed Workhouse School, where, perforce, children see and speak to adult paupers, from whom emanates the fatal “taint,” may turn out manlier boys and more womanly women if the schoolmaster and schoolmistress are wise and loving, than will come from a Cottage Home where all material conditions are faultless, but which is officered by unsympathetic and self-absorbed persons, who look upon their duties as merely so much work for so much salary. No good work of any sort, least of all for children, was ever done in this spirit.

Some systems, of course, are more likely to produce good results than others, and I observe that the system which is at present in favour is Cottage Homes. It is curious to see the change which is creeping over people with regard to Boarding-out. To one who always regarded the system with misgiving, this is hardly surprising. Experienced people are coming to see, what they might surely have realised at the first, that although Boarding-out, where it succeeds, is a wonder-

ful success and a thing to be thankful for, the chances of failure are many and disastrous. I think we need not take seriously the suggestion I remember to have seen somewhere lately, that children should be boarded-out rather than sent to industrial schools. People who send their own well-brought-up sons to school for the sake of the discipline involved in such training, are not likely to waste their time considering the desirability of placing children on the verge of crime under the lax and uncertain discipline of a foster-parent in a country village.

Of the so-called "Barrack Schools" I will say nothing, because I know nothing, though this may be a form of consideration to which the managers are unaccustomed. Also, no one proposes to build any more of them.

I will consider the various classes of children under the care of the Guardians, and the various methods we have of dealing with them, and will endeavour to show how much more we might do for their benefit if we only fairly acknowledged our own inability to know and to do everything. It is not because I think Guardians have done nothing praiseworthy for the children—on the contrary, they have done much; but at a Poor Law Conference we come together rather to discuss our weak points, to see where we may improve, than to sing our own praises.

CLASSIFICATION.—This, in small schools or homes, is impossible to attain so long as we persist in doing all the work "on the premises," instead of sending away those parts of it which are better performed by experts. But I have never been able to understand why in large institutions so little is attempted. When there are two or more homes or blocks for the reception of each of the three divisions of childhood—viz., boys, girls, and infants—surely, after probation in the Temporary School (the Unions which have such schools

can never be sufficiently grateful to the Guardians who established them), a better system than thrusting the new-comers into any home with sufficient empty beds might be devised. Some Boards, in large towns, make a practice of taking fatherless children from their mother and bringing them up in the schools. What right have they, after breaking the family tie, to bring orphans of respectable parentage up side by side with the children of ins-and-outs and criminals? One home could surely be set apart for these cases, and another for the worst class of permanent children. But is this done? I have never heard that it is. In smaller Unions, where the numbers only demand a small amount of accommodation, classification is impossible except by calling in voluntary agencies. Orphans should not remain with us. If they are young enough they should be boarded-out, or emigrated, both boys and girls, but especially girls. We have such a splendid opening for our boys as seamen, that one is tempted to keep them beyond the age for emigration or boarding-out, on the chance that they will be glad to go to the "Exmouth." It is astonishing how gladly they go, and how well they do. Except for these openings it is really difficult to get the lads off our hands owing to the antiquated regulation that the apprentice must live with his master. They appear to have "got round" this somehow at Liverpool, and I heartily congratulate them on their skill! If boys are to learn trades, or even to be errand boys or labourers, they must, under modern conditions, either return to the Poor Law Institution at night, which, unless special arrangements can be made, would mean disorganisation in the school, or their maintenance must be paid for, in part at least, at a Working Boys' Home, between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, when their wages would not suffice for their support.

As to trades, is it altogether desirable that they

should become tradesmen? Every capable lad should be encouraged to develop his faculties, and be given a chance of rising in the world; but most boys have no special aptitudes, and why, backed by the ratepayers' money, are they to come into direct competition with the children of the ratepayers, many of whom cannot afford premiums for their sons, and must be content to see them become labourers? Labourers there must always be. It is a perfectly honourable career, and one not to be despised by our boys; but to go to sea, or become helpers in the building up of Greater Britain, removes this competition, while it opens prospects of more advancement than any, but exceptional boys, who remain in their own Union are likely to attain. Again, if this is true of the boys, it is doubly true of the girls. To send these to Canada while yet young is truly to make their fortune, and to remove them once for all from the weary round of inferior service. But they must be quite children, under ten if possible—certainly not over twelve—or they may be “adopted” as servants without wages, and are thus exposed to dangers and temptations from which the little one, who made her home in her foster-parents' hearts before she was any use except for loving, would be guarded. We cannot say we have no demand for our girls, and therefore the Guardians are much less willing to spend money in giving them a really good start than in the case of the boys. Applications for servants come in plenty, and, after a report from the relieving officer, the girl goes to her place—perhaps she is not even taken to it by her matron or schoolmistress! Surely this is emphatically a feminine employment, and the Guardians in London have recognised this once for all in their relations with the M.A.B.Y.S. Why are other Guardians so slow to follow their example? The Girls' Friendly Society, Ladies' Associations, Workhouse Visiting Committees, would undertake the work. But if the Guardians

mistrust all these, and even the ladies appointed by themselves to visit the Workhouse, they might entrust the duty of visiting the mistress to their matron after receiving the relieving officer's general report on the respectability of the family. Let her see the sleeping accommodation, and discuss the little maid's duties. As long as this inspection is performed by a man, so long will there be no improvement in the class of situation. It is all too necessary to insist on seeing the girl's bedroom and approaches thereto, and no lady who determined to take a child from the Guardians would object to showing the matron over her servants' quarters. But no lady will ever give a child such a chance if the necessary preliminary is that the relieving officer of the district is to stalk through her maid-servants' bedrooms!

In placing out their girls the Guardians should be careful to see that they get the current rate of wages. Under an old form of agreement they may be hiring them out below the market price, while they supply an outfit far better than anything self-supporting parents could give their daughter. £5 worth of clothes and low wages may well account for the numerous applications we receive. In consideration of the good outfit and previous training the girl is presumed to have had, the Guardians might ask a little more rather than a little less, and we should then be able to judge the real demand for our children. The employer benefits largely by the tidy clothes; it is not reasonable he should have them cheap!

Now that, to their great advantage, the children of smaller Unions attend the neighbouring elementary schools, the industrial work is necessarily pushed somewhat into the background, and it seems desirable to keep the girls a little time after they have left school to learn house-work more thoroughly, and to save the Guardians from hiring efficient labour. The plan sounds so sensible—I wish I could say it turns

out sensibly. So much depends on the care and sympathy of the officer in charge, and girls may be driven to rebellion and defiance by being regarded by the woman in charge of the infants, not as children growing into womanhood and entrusted to her care for teaching and help all round, but as tiresome slaveys, whose business it is to do all her work for her, as well and as expeditiously as if they were twenty-four instead of fourteen! And yet the same woman may retain the affections of the infants in a remarkable manner. If young girls are to be entrusted to the "mothers" of Infants' Homes or departments for training, double care must be taken in the appointment of the latter.

It by no means follows that those who are fondest of little children care for growing girls, or have most patience with their waywardness. Unfortunately, many Guardians seem to regard the training of the children as a thing any woman can do, and therefore they give the care of them to some one who wants a job, rather than look long and carefully for a worker fitted for the work. The incompetent person once installed, and the mistake becoming visible, they cannot dismiss her themselves, but have, after enduring neglect of duty to an extent no voluntary committee would permit, to induce her to send in her resignation, and she probably then asks for a testimonial! Do public bodies ever refuse to give these, I wonder! This lax custom of giving testimonials is one of the reasons Guardians are so apt to be misled in making appointments! In the advertisement they probably limit the number of testimonials to be sent in, and then they feel, justly perhaps, as far as the candidates are concerned, but most unjustly as regards the children and the ratepayers, that they must listen to no further information concerning them. The testimonials handed in are from public bodies, with, perhaps, one from the clergyman, who has "known so and so from a child." Experience

leads one to feel they are as formal as a vote of thanks, and prompted by the same kindly feeling.

One word more before I leave this branch of the subject. If Guardians would but realise that these "girls" whose naughtiness causes so much astonishment are mere children, their attitude towards them would surely be different. Were they our own, we should speak of "the children's" faults; even if serious, they would be regarded as childish. But these children, handicapped from the outset by a bad inheritance, are lectured on the enormity of their ways as if they were grown-up women. Let us try to imagine what our own daughters of fourteen or thereabouts would be like if they were treated in a similar manner? Once think this out, and a juster view of the situation must prevail. What would the child be like if, instead of her sheltered surroundings, she was expected to have the strength and experience of a woman, and to employ these gifts in drudgery for people who care nothing for her, and in whom there is certainly nothing to awaken her capacity for love or for hero worship? The most enthusiastic admirer of representative institutions will not ascribe to a Committee of the Board of Guardians these soul-stirring attributes. And when the frightened wayward child is brought before this august body for reproof, they complete the tale of their offences, in her estimation, by calling her "Smith" instead of "Mary Anne"—a practice she particularly dislikes. This may seem a little thing, but it is not so to the little person concerned. If a boy or girl persistently fails to get on with the officer in charge, a change should be made. Neither child nor officer may be particularly to blame for the misunderstanding, but nothing can be worse than maintaining such a relationship. Many children owe all their success in life to a timely removal of this nature, while others who have been placed in service instead, and placed again and again, remain for ever at the bottom of the ladder, if indeed

nothing worse befalls them, and all because of an unwillingness to incur an immediate outlay—the expense of renewed outfits for these cases being overlooked. There is terrible danger of being penny wise where children are concerned! My personal experience in the use of Voluntary Homes has been such that I would fain send every girl for training in one or two that I know before placing her out in the world. The range of situations is larger and of a better class, and the after care is incomparably better. Besides which no Voluntary Committee would expect one untrained superintendent to take sole charge of twenty to thirty girls, they would pay a good salary to their matron, and give her adequate assistance in the performance of her work.

Children of immoral and depraved habits should never remain in our Schools or Homes; and while we are finding suitable Homes for their reception, and awaiting permission to place them, they should be removed, by special order of the Board, to some department of the Workhouse, the reason being duly stated on the Minutes. Here, unfortunately, they may have to remain for weeks, while the Secretary of the Home selected is clamouring for a reply (vacancies cannot be kept open indefinitely), because, for some reason incomprehensible to outsiders, the Local Government Board finds it less trouble to answer its letters after the lapse of three, or even six weeks, than to answer them in one. And we are forced to apply to the Board, for the Homes certified under the Local Government Board are all for good children, in order to save them from “the pauper taint.” There are none for those needing to be saved from their own taint. It would be a good work to establish one; perhaps some one may see their way to it.

Of course we cannot always rid the Schools thus of such children, for while all the expense and responsibility of their upbringing is borne by the ratepayers,

the lazy and incompetent parent retains all the authority, and may insist on his child's remaining within reach of regular visits from himself. Then, if the children are very young, it may be impossible to remove them even to the Workhouse. The Old Women's Ward is the only one in which they could be placed, and Guardians would naturally shrink from imposing such an inmate on the old ladies.

It remains to consider those unfortunate children who are under the care of the Guardians, but who are unable to be placed in the Children's Department, viz., the infants, the invalids, the imbeciles, and the epileptics, and those grown-up children the feeble-minded. At Conferences the interests of three of these classes receive constant and exhaustive attention, but at present only the feeble-minded have profited therefrom. I fear it must be confessed that this difference exists because, while help for the feeble-minded *cannot* come from the Poor-Law Authority, and the cause has therefore called forth much hard and self-denying voluntary work, help for imbeciles and epileptics lies with the Guardians, and they have let it lie! If it ever strikes the average Guardian that imbecile and sane epileptic children are grievously wronged by being placed in Adult Wards, the fact that there is nowhere else to put them causes the painful subject to be dismissed as one which it is useless to consider, for nothing better is at hand to do.

With feeble-minded girls the case is different, but I do not propose to discuss what has been so fully and ably discussed here of late years. I would only urge Guardians never to grudge the money paid for maintenance in a Home for such cases. They save the girl from destruction in body and soul, and the ratepayers endless outlay in hospital expenses for herself and her descendants. Free from the influence of the degraded men and women of the Workhouse, most of these girls will keep straight, for they are only too amenable to the

forces immediately around them. I say the influence of *men* and women advisedly, for it is not always that the girl discharges herself from the Workhouse because she is tired of it, or because urged to it by one of her own sex, but because she is invited to do so by some man who has noticed her on the female side of the dining-hall or chapel during his winter residence in the Workhouse. Elaborate regulations have been laid down for the separation of the sexes in the Workhouse, and they are on the whole successful. They would undoubtedly be more so but for the extraordinary omission of any directions concerning dining-hall and chapel, and Guardians have availed themselves of the omission to build common rooms for these purposes. This omission adds one more to the inducements offered to ill-conducted men and women to spend the winter months with us, and a foolish feeble girl is flattered to her ruin on receiving a note from a young man asking her to leave the Workhouse with him. She consents. They tramp the summer through, and in the winter the ratepayers have to provide for her and her child. The following year, with, perhaps, a fresh companion in either case, the same thing happens, and year by year this outrage on decency and justice takes place, while the Guardians, ratepayers themselves, take no steps to mitigate it by the erection of an inexpensive partition. This is all we can do ; but it would be a great preventative pending the happy days when Male and Female Workhouses shall be some miles apart. To those Boards about to rebuild or enlarge, I must suggest, that they should ask permission to try the experiment of separate Workhouses. Working expenses would be very little increased, while the expenditure in worry, as regards officers as well as inmates, would be halved ! The Female Workhouse might well become a reformatory institution owing to the superior class of women we might hope to obtain as officers.

We bemoan the fate of imbeciles, epileptics, and

sick children, but if Boards of Guardians would only co-operate with each other we might make a beginning of better things, while we await the heroic legislation which is to do our work for us, and which is very long in coming. Birmingham is, I believe, leading in this, as in other points of Workhouse management. I do not know what their scheme may be, but I cannot understand why the large Unions do not set apart a Cottage Home under skilled and adequate superintendence at once for these afflicted children. Why should not we of smaller Unions combine with each other within a certain area, and arrange that one Board should accommodate the imbeciles and another the epileptics. Perhaps some new building might be necessary, or a ward could be set apart for the purpose. Experienced attendants would be provided, and each Board would pay for its own children. Surely we are not so utterly without confidence in each other, and so consumed by a *local* public spirit, which grudges to come to the help of its neighbours, that such a scheme must be dismissed as visionary! Let us see if some such attempt cannot result from this Conference.

Sick children, too, should be dealt with in the same way. Only in very large Workhouses is it possible to have a Children's Ward; in others, the occasional sick children are placed in the ordinary Infirmary Wards. This is to me a far sadder sight than the state of the idiots. An innocent boy or girl suffering from St Vitus' dance, hip disease, or other long and perhaps incurable complaint, spends months or years surrounded by sick adult paupers; and although our sympathy for these latter may be great, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that their society is singularly unimproving, and that they did not, for the most part, find their way to the Workhouse Infirmary on account of their virtues.

Surely these children, before all others, deserve our

consideration. Perhaps, as the law stands, it would be impossible for Boards to unite in maintaining a fully equipped hospital in a specially eligible and central point of their district. If so, we must fall back on the system of entrusting them to one Board which shall undertake to provide skilled day and night nursing, and such mental instruction as the children are capable of receiving. Many of them are capable of profiting by teaching, especially by Kindergarten. It is criminal to give them no instruction but what they imbibe from the mind and manners of the adult inmate.

A Children's Hospital seems to me one of our most urgent needs at the present time. The children from each Union might be few, but they are entitled to all help for mind and body. Under the present system the precious years of childhood are spent, at best, in the Children's Ward of the General Infirmary, and no attempt is made to give them any training for life. Yet they may be up and about all day, idling in the Infirmary Day Room.

Lastly, I must say a few words on the Nursery, ending where, perhaps, I should have begun.

The Guardians of large Unions are waking up to the necessity of providing proper care for the babies. Where there are enough of them they recognise that a feeble or immoral mother is not the best person to bring up her own child. Here Birmingham is again to the fore, while at Burnley they have established an excellent Cottage Nursery. But these things are not for us in small Workhouses, however strongly some of us are convinced that an experienced woman in the Nursery would justify her appointment were only six to twelve children under her care. Nurses are provided for smaller families where it would be more than unusual to find six or eight children under three! As it is, a wardswoman is appointed, usually from among the mothers themselves, and frequent quarrelling is the result. A pauper fit to be entrusted with the super-

vision of mothers and children is an unknown quantity. The cleanest and ablest woman is apt to be employed in the laundry, where there is probably more washing than there is strength for ; and if she is retained in the Nursery, this somewhat capable person has frequently that temper which goes with her love of cleanliness, but which does not agree with the care of children.

The Guardians should at least insist that only the best women in the House should be occupied about the Nursery, and they should look carefully into the matter themselves. If they do, they will come to the conclusion that paid help is necessary. Then the infants would be transferred to the Children's Department, with not everything to learn and unlearn, as is now often the case. As a makeshift, it might be possible to combine the office with that of caretaker in the Girls' Temporary School. This would be but a makeshift, but it would be far better than nothing, and the Temporary School is much to be desired. I have avoided dwelling upon points where our superiors in London, or the Law itself, seem to be in fault, and have merely dwelt on those details where we fail to make full use of the power which is already ours. Let us show ourselves worthy of what we have, before we cry out for more, and I hope I have shown that there is much we can do at once for our children by individual attention, rather than by large expenditure. But it is impossible to ignore the subject of "control" when dealing with these matters. For lack of this our efforts are checkmated on every hand. Deserted children, and those whose parents undergo punishment on their account, we have already power to detain, and the more fully and freely Guardians use this power, the fewer deserted and neglected children will there be. Immediate power over their children for begging purposes—ultimate power over them after a good education has been given by the ratepayers—these are advantages parents are very keen to appreciate. They

will be slow to incur the loss of them as they come to understand the matter more clearly.

I rejoice to hear from Miss Clifford that a Bill for the adoption of orphans has been drafted, and has, I gather, some prospect of becoming law. It is preposterous that a mere child of fourteen should be able to leave the employer with whom he is placed and enter upon a vagrant or criminal career, and that nobody should have the power to stop him. It is equally undesirable that the employer should be able to dismiss him or hand him on to a friend without reference to those who entrusted him to his care. An agreement is generally signed by the latter, which restricts his liberty in this matter, but there is no power to restrict that of the children themselves if they are orphans.

Happily they do not know this, and we do not tell them, but if an unworthy relation gets hold of the child we are powerless. This is very wrong. Uncles and aunts must either bring up the children themselves, or understand that they lose all claim to them when they let the ratepayers perform the duty.

With regard to parents, the case is somewhat different. Strong powers of control would undoubtedly be better for the children, and the parents deserve no consideration on account of their personal merits, but the subject is an extremely difficult one.

Take parents who habitually reside in the Workhouse, discharging themselves for a month in the hop-picking season, and who manage thus without any expense or trouble to themselves to bring up a large family to be an expense and trouble to the ratepayers. To have to consult them in the management of their children is abominable. The Guardians ought to be able to send them to sea, or to Industrial Schools, or dispose of them in any way they think proper. There can be no doubt about this, but who is to define "habitual residence"; and being defined, and the definition becoming understood of the pauper, would he not lay out

his profitable career so as to get round the law, and perhaps become a "revolver" rather than resident? Then the last state of his children would be worse than the first.

The Police, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the Children's Aid Society can and do prosecute neglectful parents. Is it not better that we should be in very close communication with them rather than become ourselves prosecutors? The Guardians' business is to relieve destitution without regard to character. Shall we not do our share if we give notice to these authorities whenever ill-used children enter the Workhouse or the Casual Ward? Of course we must be able to detain for a short time—indeed, where children come in suffering from the results of neglect or of vice, that ought to be of itself justification for restraining the parents till the matter has been thoroughly gone into. The knowledge that this would be done, and that punishment might result, would, I feel sure, largely diminish the number of children in the Tramp Wards. I am not at all sure that it would lessen the number of children on the road. Parents, anticipating the fate awaiting them, would get rid of the children by fair means or foul, when they felt themselves in need of rest and refreshment in the Workhouse, while those who really wished to be rid of them altogether would easily find means to foist them on the ratepayers. It is useless to talk of making them pay. As Mr Brook-Lambert justly remarks, "you cannot distrain on dust and cobwebs." If the Magistrates will convict, they can be sent to prison, but they cannot be kept there in perpetuity, and imprisonment is only one degree, if at all, worse than the Tramp Ward. Besides which, a man must take the ups and downs of his luck.

Whatever doubt one may feel about the expediency of detaining legitimate children with parents to the fore, there can be none about the subject of control

generally. I, for one, should welcome very large powers of detention for all paupers under age. At present they escape from restraint of both parents and guardians at the age of sixteen. But the years between sixteen and twenty-one are the most dangerous of all. We know from criminal statistics that it is during those years that crime is most frequent. A power of restraint would be no burden to the good—it might mean salvation for life to the weak of either sex. Motherhood should be no bar to detention, rather it should be a sufficient reason for employing it. But to discuss these far-off benefits would be waste of time, on which I have already made considerable inroads. We will defer it till there seems a probability of such a discussion being practically useful.

My day of small things is to urge my fellow-Guardians to give the children every chance in their power. Like all good parents and guardians they will have to keep themselves in the background if they mean to do it. No self-gratification in the possession of fine buildings, or even in rows of pegs for winter coats and cloaks, must be sought, but a consciousness that we have done our best by handing some of the more interesting portions of our work to those who can do it better, and co-operating, in a large-hearted way, with other Boards to do that work thoroughly which Guardians alone can do, but which must be done in combination. The progress already made is great. Let us close the century, and make one more step forward during the Victorian era, by bringing up those of our great Queen's subjects who are under our special care and always specially near her heart, namely, the children, in such a manner that they may prove true and loyal citizens of the Empire, when they salute as king her great-grandson, little Prince Edward of York, to whose generation they belong.

DISCUSSION.

General DAVIES (Pershore) said he was very glad indeed that at that Conference, as at the Central Conference, they had had a paper read on the condition of the pauper children, because he was quite convinced that the only way to clear the workhouses in future was by educating the young, and not by trying to improve the old and often dissolute pauper. He quite agreed that there were only two good systems—Cottage Homes and Boarding-out. In the smaller Unions they could not afford to try Cottage Homes, so that the thing to do, therefore, in his opinion was to board out the children. He did not think it was possible to unite with other Unions in the boarding-out of children. No doubt there had been scandalous cases of people who had simply taken in children for what they could get. But those abuses had been chiefly where large urban Unions had had to send children far away to people who took little or no interest in them. It was very different in the country, where there were Ladies' Committees, and every one took an interest in the small number of children that were boarded out. In his own Union there were only four children sent out at the present time. For those children, and no doubt for a great many more, they could find excellent foster-parents within the Union District. It was much better than bringing up children within the workhouse, where they generally became idle loafers. (Mr MURRAY BROWNE—No, no.) It was so, he had seen such cases. They loafed about and formed idle habits, but boarded-out children invariably did well. As to imbeciles, he was one of those who believed that workhouses were very bad places for imbeciles. The average Master knew nothing about the management of imbeciles. Here, again, small Unions were at a great disadvantage as compared with the large Unions. He hoped that the time was approaching when the counties would provide idiot asylums. Until that time the imbecile could not be properly treated. Again, after the children were properly educated, the Guardians ought to send them into proper situations, especially the girls, and see that they did not in their younger days go astray. The boys might occasionally find openings in the Army Bands. They were taken very young as drummers. He hoped that the Guardians would all take up the question of the education of vagrant children, and so try to do away with the army of tramps in the future.

Mr H. J. MANTON (Birmingham) took courage from the kindly way in which the writer of the paper had referred to the Cottage Home system, with which he had been connected ever since its initiation sixteen years ago. Other Unions had imitated Birmingham, and some had improved upon its methods. He would be very glad if the in-and-out element could be got rid of altogether in their Cottage Homes, but he believed that the good children had not been pulled down morally so much as the in-and-outs, the vagrant children, had been benefited by contact with the others. It was

not the children of hereditary taint who did the harm, but the children of the in-and-out class who wrought evil. If they could classify the children so as not to have any of the in-and-out children mixing with the others, their results would be even better than they were now. As to the weak-minded children, a colleague of his, the Chairman of the Infirmary Committee, took a great and deep interest in the question, and had been to the different asylums, and had been in contact with the leading authorities in London with a view to establishing proper places for the training of the weak-minded. They were told that such children were capable of being trained, feeble as their intellects were. It was the duty of the officers to find out in what direction to develop each child. He was surprised to hear that the writer of the paper regarded that as no part of the Poor Law work. Anything that was for the good of the poor was part of the Poor Law work. They were told that it was rather a matter for the County Councils, and that no attempt should be made to deal with less than two hundred children on account of the expense. His Board instructed him to convene a Conference of the three counties of Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Worcestershire, and see whether something could be done in the matter. Unless Guardians did something, nothing at all would be done. He was not prepared to say that Birmingham would do anything, but he believed that if they received sufficient encouragement from their friends round about that there would be no difficulty in coming to some arrangement. While they were pretty well agreed that something should be done, nothing had been done. They recently sent out two hundred circulars on the subject, and received thirteen replies. That was discouraging. Birmingham did not wish to be predominant in the matter except so far as it was for the good of the work. He therefore asked whether those present would not be willing to join in some project which would enable them to erect an institution for about two hundred weak-minded children for the purpose of efficiently training them. They would then be able to deal with these cases in an efficient manner, and probably without any more expense than was now involved in their maintenance. He hoped that the Conference would not allow the question to rest. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs TREBILCO (Barton Regis) said that in her Union, if a person wanted one of the girls as a servant, the schoolmistress visited the applicant's house, inspected the bedroom, and inquired what the duties were. If she approved, the girl was sent for a month on trial. At the end of that time, if the girl liked the situation, and the employer was satisfied, the girl received an outfit. When the children had their summer outing, all the girls so placed out were invited, and in that way the Guardians kept in touch with the children.

Colonel BROWNE (Thornbury) said he had had a letter from a lady who had a great deal to do as a member of a Ladies' Committee with boarding-out in a populous district on the outskirts of Bristol.

She said that she considered the system a success. They were extremely particular in selecting homes and foster-parents, and the children were frequently visited. Everything depended on the interest that the committee took in the work. Any further knowledge he had of boarding-out was derived from the remarkably impartial, lucid, and energetic reports of Miss Mason.

Rev. T. FLINTOFF (Martley) said that the small country Unions had not found it possible to introduce the boarding-out system. In country Unions the most suitable plan seemed to be for the children to live in the workhouse and go to the parish school. His own experience of workhouse children had not been hopeful. The most hopeless cases they ever received in the reformatories, of which he knew something, were boys who had been in the workhouses. His object was to call attention to the very great injury that was done to boys by relegating them to the workhouse after conviction for criminal offences. What could be more monstrous than that a place that was the home of the unfortunate should be made a receptacle for criminals. In country workhouses there was no means of coercing such boys, and the first thing a boy did was to try and escape. He then swaggered into the reformatory with all the *kudos* of having broken out of custody, and he became a focus of contamination of the boys with whom he associated. He believed that the Departmental Committee which had lately been sitting on reformatories had abolished the system of interim imprisonment. (Hear, hear.)

Mr W. CHANCE (Hon. Sec., Central Conference) said he felt rather diffident about addressing the Conference, as he could not help thinking that one of the great points about those gatherings was that they heard practical speeches from those who had to engage in the work of Poor Law administration. The paper was one of the best ever read at the Conference. Mrs Browne said she knew nothing about the barrack schools. A moderate-sized barrack school was not at all a bad thing. It was the great overgrown barrack schools that were wrong. In boarding-out everything depended upon administration. Boarding-out Committees were very apt to get into the hands of one person, and that was the greatest evil that could happen. He was sorry to hear that there were some Boards of Guardians who were content with giving the children an outfit when they left the Unions, and took no care to see that they got good wages and good homes. He hoped, however, that such Boards were the exception. Dr Rhodes omitted in his paper to make any reference to one point in which great progress had been made, namely, in the interest that women were taking in Poor Law work. Ladies had brought about very wonderful changes in the management of Unions with which he was acquainted. As to pauper attendants, he would only remark that they were never economical. The best and cheapest plan was to have trained attendants and pay them well. (Hear, hear.)

Dr RHODES said that perhaps in extenuation of his omitting to men-

tion the ladies he might say that he was only a bachelor. (Laughter.) He used to be a very strong advocate of boarding-out, but personal visiting of the cases had convinced him that there was no system that wanted more closely watching than that of boarding-out. Not more than two years ago in his own Union they had every case visited, and seventeen out of twenty cases were so disgraceful that they had to be removed. The interest of the foster-parent seemed to die out, and children were soon infinitely worse off than in the Unions. They must develop the individuality of the children. Let them have variety, and let them be taught the difference between "mine" and "thine," and a good deal might be done in that way by giving the children toys and allowing each child to own toys. (Hear, hear.) There was nothing worse than having a small supply of officers. He was of opinion that no Homes should be built for more than twelve children, and they ought to have a thoroughly competent woman in charge of each Home. With regard to the ins-and-outs, he did think that for the further benefit of these children more power should be given to the Guardians in the way of adopting them. With regard to emigration, he had been in communication with a lady who had visited Canada, and she did not give anything like the rosy account which some people gave of that country. If they could find good homes for the children here, why send them away? With regard to feeble-minded girls, he quite agreed that something ought to be done for them. It was one of the burning questions of the day. If ladies who wanted something to do would take it up they might distinguish themselves. (Hear, hear.) The feeble-minded children who were wandering about the small workhouses were the ones who specially called for consideration. He was glad to hear of the Bill for the adoption of children, and the sooner they had the power to keep children from their parents the better.

Mr J. J. SIMPSON (Bristol) said that many of the faults of the past half century were traceable to defects in management. The most successful systems seemed to be boarding-out, Cottage Homes, and sending the children to the local elementary schools. The greatest care must be taken in the selection of the homes in which the children were to be boarded out. The Cottage Home system was the most economical one for the permanent children, but it was difficult to apply it in the small Unions. It was not so much in the education of children, as in placing them out, that care would have to be taken in the immediate future. He was sorry to see that the Local Government Board was inclined to discourage the employment of industrial trainers. Many more outlets were wanted for their children, and he was glad to see that an effort was being made to place another training ship in the North of England. Great care should be taken in the selection of the first situations of the girls. Many instances had come under his notice where girls had been practically ruined through being sent to improperly selected situations. He thought it was preferable that lady Guardians rather than

matrons should go round and select the situations. Great advantages had been derived from the voluntary homes in getting girls into good situations. He was glad to see that the Manchester Guardians had just decided to establish, in connection with the Swinton Union, a house where the elder girls could receive three months' instruction in domestic service. The house, which would be capable of accommodating twelve children, would be conducted just on the lines of an ordinary private residence, so that the girls would have an opportunity of finding out what domestic service was like. He entirely endorsed Dr Rhodes's remark as to increasing the powers of the Guardians over the children of worthless parents. (Hear, hear.)

Mr T. G. PEGG (Coventry) wished to make a special appeal for those children who had hitherto had no benefit whatever from the Poor Law except a night's lodging in the tramp ward. The tramp evil commenced with the children. He did not see that insurmountable difficulties would arise if Boards of Guardians had power to detain for a week persons tramping with children, who should during that time receive ordinary elementary education. If that were properly done, very great good must ensue from it.

Miss STACEY (King's Norton) said that the Birmingham Guardians stated that not fewer than two hundred imbecile children ought to be housed together. Her experience was not among imbecile children, but among feeble-minded adults, and she did not know how they would manage with so many. They must be managed individually. She supposed that for two hundred they might have twenty Cottage Homes, which would be again more expensive. Nothing had been done of late years to forward the subject of the classification of workhouses. She did not see how the smaller Unions could deal with special classes unless they united for common action upon the question. She was very much afraid that another five or six years would elapse before anything was done for the epileptic and feeble-minded children. She was very earnest that something should be done. (Hear, hear.) As to the ins-and-outs, she did not quite agree with Mrs Browne as to the effect on the workhouse children of contact with them. If Boards of Guardians had no means of training girls before sending them out to service, might she remind them that there were numbers of small certified Homes in the country for training children for service. It was money well spent for Guardians to send their children to those Homes for a few months before sending them out to service. (Hear, hear.)

Mr CORDY MANBY (Kidderminster) was very glad to find that the question of how to treat the weak-minded inmates was at last receiving attention. The Kidderminster Guardians had sent some of the children to Canada, and they had done very well, having in some cases sent for their younger brothers. The children of women who were living in the House were the most difficult to deal with. They seemed to have the power to object to the children being sent even to a small Home. He would be glad to hear how to deal with

them. He would also like to hear from General Davies what was the standard of chest measurement for drummers. They had had a difficulty about some of the boys in this respect.

General DAVIES advised Mr Manby to apply to the officer commanding the regimental district in which his Union was situated.

Dr RHODES said that in his Union they formerly had great difficulties about chest measurement; but in order to avoid having boys rejected on that score, they had now provided a gymnasium in which the boys were thoroughly trained. (Hear, hear.)

Mr STEPHEN GATELEY (Birmingham) said that the writer of the paper had complained of differences between the treatment of the boys and the girls. The lady Guardians in his Union made the same complaint, and it was the fact that the boys in the Homes were generally more successful than the girls in after life. The lady Guardians suggested that one of the Homes should be placed at their disposal in order that during the last year of a girl's training she might be taught domestic matters, such as to lay tables and clean plate and furniture. The Board were disposed to concede that much to the ladies. They felt that the girls were not so successful as the boys, and before very long the ladies would be able to make the experiment. (Hear, hear.) Last winter they employed a specialist to teach the girls cookery, and they had opened a room for the purpose of sewing classes. In connection with Marston Green Homes they had an infirmary, to which the sick children were removed, and in three years there had been but one death. He thought that showed how successful had been the management of the Homes. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. GEORGE ASTBURY (King's Norton) said he had been for some years the Chairman of the Boarding-out Committee of the Bromsgrove Union. The chief difficulty had been that too many children were already in those homes where the would-be foster-parents were anxious to receive a further addition to their families. He was glad to say that their Cottage Homes had been a great success. They had been the subject of excellent report, but the Local Government Board had recently issued an order which would, he feared, upset all the arrangements of those Homes, that requiring that the children must be kept in school until they were fourteen years of age. Where did they get the authority from? Not from the Education Acts. The Guardians, who were in the position of parents to these children, considered that while it was necessary that the children should go to school until, say, their thirteenth year, they should also have an opportunity of receiving such technical instruction as would enable them soon to be in a position to keep themselves. It was a provision which would almost necessitate the closing of the Homes. He could not help thinking that those who were responsible for the order had drawn it up on the representation of the London authorities, and although it might be very good for London, it did not meet the requirements of provincial Cottage

Homes. The authorities had declined to receive a deputation upon the subject, and he did not think that was the way that Guardians ought to be treated. (Hear, hear.) He felt very deeply about the feeble-minded and the epileptics, and he would like to propose a resolution that the Conference was of opinion that it was urgently necessary to provide suitable accommodation for the training of epileptic and feeble-minded persons. Such a resolution might help on the movement in Birmingham.

Mr J. ARCH (Coventry) said he would be very pleased to second the resolution. The time was ripe for something of the kind.

The CHAIRMAN said he spent the previous morning at the County Lunatic Asylum at Worcester, and he thought he might say that there was a general feeling that any further extension of the Asylum should take the form of provision for the feeble-minded.

Mr H. J. MANTON said he did not name the minimum of two hundred as his own opinion. The number of lunatics in Birmingham had enormously increased, and the City Asylum authorities would not be likely to throw cold water on any scheme of the kind that had just been proposed.

Mr W. EVANS (Burton) suggested that boys who had just left the Union should be allowed to work half-time and pass the remainder of their time at school. He wished to say also that it was utterly useless to send little girls to service unless they had had some previous training, especially as mistresses wanted a great deal too much out of them.

Mr G. E. LLOYD-BAKER moved a vote of thanks to the Chairman. They were all very glad indeed to see his Lordship so early taking an interest in subjects of such great importance. (Hear, hear.)

The vote of thanks having been accorded with acclamation,

The CHAIRMAN thanked the members very cordially, and said that his only regret had been that, owing to their usual practice, his speech, as President, was not debated.

The Conference then terminated.

South Wales District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

EIGHTH POOR LAW CONFERENCE FOR THE SOUTH
WALES AND MONMOUTHSHIRE DISTRICT, HELD AT
THE LANGLAND BAY HOTEL, SWANSEA, ON 6TH
AND 7TH MAY 1897.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

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Thursday, 6th May 1897.

MR O. H. JONES, of Fonmon Castle, *Chairman of the Cardiff Board of Guardians*, IN THE CHAIR.

Friday, 7th May 1897.

REV. CANON EDMONDES, *Chairman of the Bridgend and Cowbridge Board of Guardians*, IN THE CHAIR.

THURSDAY, 6th May 1897.

The CHAIRMAN said that the first paper would be by Mr Lleufer Thomas (Secretary of the Welsh Land Commission), but before calling upon Mr Thomas, he must say that he felt highly honoured at being asked to preside over this gathering. For many years he had been connected with Poor Law administration in one position or another at Cardiff, and that had given him a certain amount of experience. Such Conferences seemed to him to be very valuable, because they afforded an opportunity of exchange of opinion which might be very useful in correcting their views. The administration of Poor Law in this country was no light matter. It had always been an extremely difficult problem, but he thought that pauperism had never been more efficiently dealt with than at the present time. In saying so, he did not mean that the system was perfect, or nearly so; but he thought that any one who would carefully and impartially examine the statistics would be bound to admit that since 1834 great progress had been made in coping with the question. (Hear, hear.) It was the duty of Guardians to administer relief fairly and honestly, and as economically as possible, and he was of opinion that a strict administration of relief was in the end the most humane to the recipient, and best for the ratepayers upon whom the cost of it ultimately fell. He had great pleasure in calling upon Mr Lleufer Thomas, who, as Secretary of the Welsh Land Commission and in a previous appointment, had had excellent opportunities of forming an accurate view of the Welsh agricultural labourer.

THE AGRICULTURAL LABOURER IN WALES :

HIS OPPORTUNITIES FOR THRIFT, &c.

BY MR D. LLEUFER THOMAS,

*Late Assistant Commissioner to the Royal Commission on Labour, and
Secretary to the Welsh Land Commission.*

“THE agricultural labourer, as we understand in England—namely, as a man providing his own food and that of his family, dependent altogether on the wages he receives from his employer—is comparatively rare over a large part of Wales.” Such was the statement made by the Commissioners on the Employment of Children, &c., in Agriculture, in their Welsh Report issued in 1870. The remark is, if

possible, even truer to-day than it was twenty-five years ago, and its quotation may help us to realise, at the outset, the very considerable difference that exists between the conditions of agricultural employment in Wales and in England.

Throughout the greater part of England, most of the farm-work is done by men who live on their own finding and are paid wholly in cash, except for such allowances as are in the nature of customary perquisites. This is, I believe, the universal system in all the southern, eastern, and midland counties. It is also the more prevalent form in the northern and north-western counties; but in those parts it is supplemented, especially in Cumberland and Westmoreland, by a system of boarding and lodging, at the farmhouse, a certain number of young men who are engaged as horsekeepers and stockmen.

Now, this latter arrangement, which is exceptional in England, is the customary one in Wales, while the former method—that of employing men who live on their own finding—is rare in the Principality. There is, however, an alternative third arrangement, which is practically peculiar to Wales alone, and which partakes of the nature of each of the foregoing—according to which the married labourer has his board at his employer's table, but lives, not at the farmhouse, but with his own family at a cottage in the neighbourhood.

Broadly speaking, the first system referred to—viz., that of limiting all employment to outdoor labourers who provide their own food—is found to exist in Wales only in the case of—

- (1.) All estate labour.
- (2.) Most home farms carried on by landowners.
- (3.) And an occasional holding belonging either to an English settler in Wales, or what you may call “gentlemen farmers.”

In what may be called the “English fringe” of the Principality, viz., in South Glamorgan, in South

Pembrokeshire, and generally along the border-line between Wales and England, the mixed system of the North-West of England prevails—that is, one or two young men are kept as indoor servants to look after the horses and cattle, but beyond that number all the necessary hired labour is supplied by outdoor labourers, who live on their own finding, sleeping at home in cottages, along with their families.

Throughout the remainder of Wales the following is briefly the state of things. On all the smaller farms no hired labour is at all used, the whole work being done by the farmer and his family. Where this is not practicable the deficiency is supplied by indoor servants, of whom from one to four, but rarely more, are thus engaged, and in the vast majority of cases (owing to the general smallness of Welsh holdings) no other hired labour is at all employed. In the case of the largest class of farms, and those on which a more intensive cultivation is carried on, the work of the indoor servants is supplemented by outdoor labourers, who, contrary to the custom of the “English fringe,” have their food provided by their employer, its value being roughly taken into account in the fixing of their wages.

Unfortunately, there are no means of ascertaining the respective numbers of indoor servants and of outdoor labourers at present employed in a given area, as, for some inscrutable reason, the census authorities have, since 1871, ceased to give their numbers separately, but lump them together under the general title of “labourers.” This deprives us of a most important aid in considering the problem of agricultural labour, so far as Wales is concerned, and it is to be hoped that in future censuses the two classes will be distinguished, and their numbers given separately.

But even in the absence of statistics, we know that during the last fifteen years or more, in the general

effort to retrench and to shorten their labour bills, Welsh farmers have shown a decided tendency to substitute indoor servants wherever possible for such outdoor labourers as they previously employed. The increased demand thus created for young unmarried men as indoor servants has resulted in a steady advance of their wages, and consequently many farmers have been obliged to fall back upon the cheaper labour of raw untrained boys.

Thus, in South-West Wales, and chiefly even in the most exclusively Welsh-speaking districts, scores if not hundreds of lads from English industrial and reformatory schools have, of recent years, been introduced on to farms, so as practically to take the place of trained servants. It is outside my province now to discuss whether, in the long run, this be not false economy on the part of Welsh farmers, but I would like to point out how serious a matter it may prove to thus turn rural Wales into a regular "dumping" ground for the outcast youths of English towns. The family traditions and the many other subtle influences which combine to produce habits of thrift and of sturdy independence in youths who grow up in the midst of their kinsfolk, and of friendly acquaintances, must be wholly absent from the lives of lads, shot as from a pea-shooter into the midst of a strange people, who talk a strange language, and who follow occupations for which the lads themselves may have no special aptitude. If this system is to be continued we may well pause to ask, How can these lads be made into good citizens, honest, thrifty, and self-reliant, so that their advent into Welsh Wales may strengthen rather than demoralise or add to the burdens of the farming population in the country of their adoption?

A similar question applies, but more generally, to the case of the ordinary indoor servant, whose position comes next to be considered. Without entering into too many details as to differences of wages in various

localities, I may broadly state that at present a young man, between eighteen and twenty-one years of age, generally receives from £15 to £20—less in the remoter districts—while a competent head-servant, from twenty-two years of age upwards, is paid from £20 to £25, and even £30 in special cases, as well as somewhat more generally in Glamorganshire. This is in addition to board and lodgings—the latter usually being of an execrably wretched character. A spare corner of the hayloft over the cowhouse is too frequently considered good enough for the purpose, and until quite recently the body of an old cart filled with chaff or straw was the customary servants' bed in some parts of Pembrokeshire. This inconsiderate system of kennelling young men renders it almost impossible for them to keep alive even the germ of that self-respect which is always at the root of every effort of thrift and self-denying industry, and I dread to think how many of the worst features of rural life are traceable to this complete absence of comfort and supervision in the matter of their sleeping accommodation, and the consequent loss of self-respect which this treatment inevitably produces. The wages of this class are, however, decidedly good, especially for men most of whom are at the same time acquiring proficiency in their calling. Their present high wages are, of course, the result of the increased demand for this special kind of labour; but the instrument which has secured the present rate is, in my opinion, the hiring fair, which, with a scarcity of labour, automatically acts as a sort of Trade Union, enabling the men to obtain a higher and more uniform wage than would be possible as the result of private individual engagements.

But, with the exception of Anglesey and Western Carnarvonshire, it is only the indoor servants that are thus hired at the fairs, the married outdoor labourers being engaged privately at home. The latter cannot, therefore, obtain the full benefit of those better terms

and higher wages which open competition for a scarce commodity in market overt secures for the unmarried servant, who, moreover, has the further advantage of not being tied down to the same district, but can easily move elsewhere if not satisfied as to terms. Compared with the unhampered servant who has yet given no "hostages to fortune," the outdoor labourer does not enjoy the same full power of freely bargaining with his employer, nor has he the use, for that purpose, of the same efficient instrument as custom has placed in the hands of the indoor servant.

It is thus not difficult to see that the most favourably situated of all wage-earners in agriculture is the indoor servant, and even as compared with his would-be employer, he is, at hiring time, really master of the situation. So long as he continues unmarried, he can, if so disposed, put by at least one-half of his year's wages, so as to save, say between 15 and 25 years of age, a total of from £80 to £100. Now the two chief incentives to thrift are, I take it, dread of poverty, and ambition to get on in the world. Of these, the former scarcely appeals at all to a young man of robust health, so that it remains for some sort of crude and undefined ambition, operating consciously or unconsciously, to impel him to save his earnings, so that some day he too may take a small farm of his own, or attain to some other envied position of a higher respectability or independence. But the possibilities for thus improving his position must be ever present to him in a concrete and visible form, ready to be grasped at with a little effort, and the best stimulant to do so is the living example of the success crowning the industry of the older labourers. This leads us to inquire what are the circumstances and opportunities of the ordinary outdoor labourer in Wales? Dealing first with those who live on their employers' finding, and taking my illustrations chiefly from the south-western counties, we find that a permanently engaged labourer is usually

paid from 7s. to 10s. 6d. a week in cash, rarely if indeed ever more. In many cases, where the lowest wage is paid, the labourer gets in addition a cottage and garden rent free, or at a moderate charge, a potato plot on his employer's farm, possibly some manure for that plot, together with the use of cart and horses to haul coal to his cottage. In many cases, moreover, sufficient land for keeping a cow or two is also sublet to him along with the cottage, at a rent which his employer generally represents as being less than its rack-rent.

I will just give you two instances from notes which I took in Pembrokeshire in May 1892.

The first is somewhat exceptional in its details, but will serve all the better perhaps to illustrate the remarkable survival of a system of payment in kind which has become obsolete in nearly all other industries :—

1. A large farmer in the neighbourhood of Fishguard employed three outdoor labourers, whom he paid at the rate of 7s. a week, and their food ; each of them also had a cottage and garden, and an undivided share in a large field, for all of which they paid their employer £6 a year each, free of rates. On this field they kept a cow each, but had also the right of occasionally turning it on to a moor. They were also allowed 1 stang (= 2 rood 4 perches) of barley and $\frac{1}{4}$ stang of oats, the farmer providing the labour, seed, and manure free of charge. Potato ground was also given free, but for this the labourers themselves supplied manure. They grew no hay, but had a bundle whenever required from the farmer, at whose expense the harvesting and thrashing of their corn and the haulage of their fuel ("culm" and gorse) were also done.

My second instance is more typical of ordinary engagements in South-West Wales :—

2. A freeholder of over 200 acres in the extreme north of the Narberth Union employed two outdoor labourers, whom he paid at the rate of 6s. a week in winter, and 7s. 6d. in summer, and their food. They had each a cottage and garden, together with about seven acres of land, for which one labourer paid £7 and the other £12 a year. Their employer set their corn, and did all the work requiring the use of horses, such as carrying hay, culm, and lime.

To these I may add a third example, supplied by

Mr W. O. Brigstocke of Parcygors before the Welsh Land Commission: it refers to the Cardigan Union. The following was his statement:—

“Wages are on the following scale:—Cash about 1s. 6d. per day [9s. per week], and food and potato ground. As a rule a small cottage would be let at about 30s. a year, and in some cases a bit of land sufficient to keep a cow is added—the rent of such holding would be about £5.”

Now the little holding thus carved out of the employer's own farm is commonly spoken of in Pembroke-shire as the labourer's “bargain,” owing to a pleasant little fiction that it is sublet at something considerably lower than its rack-rent. I have called this notion a fiction because in many cases the so-called “bargain” is one for which the labourer has to pay dearly—far more in fact than what would be a fair rent taking the value of the adjoining land as a basis. Nothing I think was more clearly established before the Welsh Land Commission than the abuses to which this system of subletting to labourers was liable. For example, Mr Dudley Drummond, in his capacity of agent for the Edwinsford estate, furnished some striking instances which happen to be within my own knowledge, and I can therefore, with greater freedom, quote his general statement with reference to them:—

“Subletting by the tenants has been and is being carried out to a considerable and dangerous extent, cottages let with farms being converted into small holdings, and being sublet by the tenants at from 40 to 60 per cent. increased rent over and above what the landlord is receiving.” [Parenthetically I may here add, that the labourer seldom receives a share of any abatement or reduction granted to his employer.] “The occupiers are frequently, in addition, bound to work for the tenant when required in the summer, and are not employed in winter, and great injustice and rack-renting is the result.”

This obligation to work for the farmer, who is both his landlord and his employer, often applies not only to the labourer himself, but also to his wife and family, if he has any; whence men holding under such conditions are spoken of in Pembrokeshire as “bound tenants.” No one, I think, would regard it as an ex-

cessive interference on the part of a landowner if he exercised so much control over these sublettings as would prevent their becoming an instrument in the hands of farmers either to obtain an unfair advantage over the labourer or to extort from him an inequitable rent for his privilege of keeping a cow or two.

Now too much stress can hardly be laid on the importance, in the social economy of Wales, of small holdings let on fair terms to agricultural labourers. Without them, there would be far fewer men of mature age available for farm-work in the rural districts ; while in those parts where they are abundant the labourer has, so to speak, "at his feet the lower rungs of the ladder by which, with prudence and foresight, economy and self-denial, he may rise from a labourer into the occupier of a farm."*

The maintenance of a good supply of small holdings may also prove to be the easiest way of solving the acknowledged difficulty of providing satisfactory cottages for agricultural labourers. The erection of substantial well-planned cottages for this class is too unremunerative an investment for any owner to make except by way of liberally improving his estate generally, but I firmly believe that in Wales the undertaking could almost invariably be made quite remunerative by the addition of a few acres, thereby converting the bare cottage into a small holding. But the land attached should not be of such an extent as to necessitate or tempt the labourer to give up his regular employment and try to make a living from the holding alone, or in that case it would prove to be "a crutch instead of a walking stick" for him. The best limit for the size of these holdings is the capacity of the labourer's wife to do all their ordinary daily work herself, and one of their chief advantages is that they provide sufficient work for the wife without taking her away from her cottage and her children. Since the

* Minority Report of Welsh Land Commission.

discontinuance of the system of employing married women in the open fields, the labourer requires this help if he has a family, and the only suitable opportunity which is left his wife for adding to the family income is found in the management of a few acres and a cow while he has regular employment elsewhere. The desirability of this is fortunately recognised by many. I may quote the case of the Earl of Powis' home farm and estate, where, according to the agent, "he never thinks of employing a labourer without giving him the option of having both a cottage and land."

In those districts where many of the labourers are able to keep a cow or two, or where there are many small holdings, Cow Clubs might with advantage be established, so as to insure the members against the loss of their cows. Such a club has been in existence in the hundred of Maelor, Flintshire, since 1862, and four years ago it had 170 members, mostly labourers, possessing about 400 head of cattle thus insured. In the previous year the club had paid out £48. 5s. in respect of 5 cows and 1 calf that had been lost. The subscription, I should mention, is 1s. a quarter.

Except in arable districts, and for rural residents other than farm labourers, allotments are not very suitable for adoption in Wales.

If to some of you I seem to have unduly emphasised the necessity of having land attached to labourers' cottages, my excuse for so doing in an assembly of this kind is that I know of no better nurseries for thrift, industry, and independence than the five and ten acre holdings of the smaller peasantry of Wales.

After this digression, I pass on to deal with another incident of the outdoor labourer's engagement in Welsh districts, namely, that he does not, in the English fashion, provide his own food, but receives his board at his employer's in part payment of his

wages. It is difficult to give a general estimate of the value of such food, especially as its quality differs considerably on different farms, not to speak of different localities. However, a rough estimate may be obtained by comparing the wages of a boarded labourer with one living on his own finding in the same district.

Excluding Glamorganshire, owing to the influence of its industrial districts, the average weekly wages paid in six Poor Law Unions which I visited in 1892-93 ranged from 7s. 6d. to 10s. on the employer's finding, or from 12s. to 16s. on the labourer's own food. This applies to permanently engaged labourers, but catch-work men, or those working a day here and a day there, are, owing to the greater uncertainty of employment, paid at a somewhat higher rate. The difference between these two scales of payments show that the value set upon the labourer's food generally works out at from 5s. to 6s. per week, that is from 10d. to 1s. a day. So much then is withheld from the boarded outdoor labourer in consideration for the food he receives. It would not become me to express any opinion as to whether the farmer is overcharging for this food by deducting for it 5s. or 6s. a week out of the labourer's wages. What we may, however, ask ourselves is, Whether the 5s. or 6s. in question could not be made to go much further—for the benefit of the labourer's whole family—if, instead of being retained by the farmer, it were handed over to the labourer's wife, so that she should provide all her husband's food out of that fund?

It is at least certain that from the dietetic point of view the labourer's family does suffer from this system, as the tendency of his wife in his own absence is to make shift with tea and slops for herself and children, while if she had to provide for her husband also, there would be the need of preparing at least one solid meal every day. But at present the labourer has no direct

personal interest in his wife's cooking, as he never sees anything of it except on Sundays; nor has she therefore any inducement to improve and excel in that art, a fact which partly accounts for the wretched cookery of most Welsh cottages. Another indirect result is that the garden is neglected, except for its potato crop, for the labourer would ask—what is the use of his cultivating a variety of other vegetables if it is only on one day in the week that he is at home to eat them?

But apart from these apparently minor disadvantages, would the labourer be better off in pocket if he were paid wholly in cash, and his wife had the money difference—5s. or 6s. a week—to cater for the family? Would there be a better scope for him to put a little money by, and to provide against the rainy day? Well, for a labourer of average thrift, with a wife of ordinary capacity for management, it would be decidedly better, in my opinion. This will appear much clearer to us if we consider what the average wife is already doing. We may put it to ourselves in this way: If a farmer practically charges 5s. for his labourer's food on six days of the week, how is it possible for that labourer's wife to provide food for her husband on the seventh day, and for herself and children (perhaps five or more of them) throughout all the week, as well as have a sufficient margin to clothe the whole family, to pay rent, and buy coal out of a maximum wage of about 9s. 6d. a week? Well, she does it: how, is a marvel, but once you realise that it is done, it is then not difficult to believe that she could save at least some of the 5s. if she, instead of the farmer, had to provide the food for her husband. In comparison with the 9s. 6d. taken home to feed and clothe the whole family and meet other wants, the 5s. retained in respect of the food of one only is certainly too large, even though that one be the breadwinner himself.

The conclusion which I have arrived at—though I may not be able to demonstrate it mathematically to you

—is that married labourers who are boarded at their employers' can usually save but very little of their wages unless there are some means of earning within reach of other members of the family besides the husband, such, for instance, as a small holding for the wife to manage. And, as a corollary to this, I would add that the labourer who lives on his own finding, and is paid wholly in cash, has a much better chance of saving. But it does not necessarily follow that the man who has the best opportunity will always make the most of his circumstances. In fact, the world's history proves it to be often different in so far that "necessity" is spoken of as "the mother of invention." As some test of provident habits we may compare the support given to Friendly Societies by labourers paid wholly in cash on the one hand, and by those who live on their employers' finding on the other hand. In South Glamorgan, for example, all the married labourers provide their own food, and, except for a few perquisites, are paid wholly in cash, the rate, of course, being higher than in the western districts, ranging, in fact, from 15s. to 18s. a week. Now, in no other part of Wales that I know of is there such a large proportion of agricultural labourers belonging to Friendly Societies. One club at least, sometimes two, and occasionally a women's club also, are to be found in each of the larger villages along the coast, such as Newton Nottage, St Bride's Major, Wick, Llantwit Major, St Athan's, and Llancarvan.

Some of these are numerically very strong, the Oddfellows' Lodge at Llantwit Major numbering in May 1892 as many as 215 members, of whom 96 were agricultural labourers employed at that date within the parish, while 45 had left the district, but were for the most part labourers when they joined; there were also 6 farmers' sons, 1 large farmer, and 16 smaller occupiers, the remainder being small tradesmen and artisans.

There was also an Ivorites Club in the village

with 110 members, made up of 73 farm labourers, 30 tradesmen, 3 farmers' sons, and 1 gentleman.

That was a good record for a parish with a total population in 1891 of only 1,089 persons; nor was it by any means exceptional as compared with the other villages I mentioned.

I found, however, a sadly different state of things in most of the thoroughly Welsh districts I visited where the system of boarding labourers prevailed. Thus throughout the Welsh-speaking portions of Pembrokeshire, not more than 15 to 20 per cent. of the total wage-earners in agriculture would, I think, be members of any benefit club; and the same statement would perhaps equally apply to the greater part of the two neighbouring counties also. One reason for this seems to be that such clubs as previously existed had in many cases failed through bad management, careless investment or embezzlement of funds, and the inhabitants were said to have lost all confidence in such institutions. At least one gentleman felt the gravity of this state of things, and set to remedy it with a will. I refer to the late Mr W. R. H. Powell of Maesgwynne, who was instrumental in having established, in 1874, the Friendly Society of the United Counties of Carmarthen, Pembroke, and Cardigan. This was modelled somewhat after the Hampshire Society, and the tables were specially prepared by the Actuary of the National Debt Office. Its special feature is that it is organised to provide not only sick relief, but also annuities after a certain age.

Judged from the point of numbers, Mr Powell's efforts have not hitherto been crowned with that success which they certainly deserved, for the total number of members some twenty years after the establishment of the Society was only 330, scattered over a wide area, the largest number in one lodge or branch being fifty-six at Llanboidy—Mr Powell's own village.

Contemporaneous with this, another organisation, known as the Society of Rechabites, was introduced into North Pembrokeshire, spreading therefrom to the south and east, and enrolling a large number of members. This, as I understand, is a Temperance Association, organised as a Benefit Society, and it has been particularly successful in cultivating habits of thrift and sobriety among the younger population. But though North Pembrokeshire compares badly with South Glamorgan as to the strength and number of Friendly Societies, still I am debarred from drawing any particular conclusion from that comparison by the fact that south of Haverfordwest, in the district of Roose, where the labourers are paid wholly in cash as in Glamorgan, there are practically no Friendly Societies. On the other side of Milford Haven, in Castlemartin (*i.e.*, in the Pembroke Union), Friendly Societies are, according to my information, better supported. But there can be no doubt that these facts have a bearing on the prevalence of pauperism, for I find that while the percentage of outdoor paupers on population for the first half-year in 1896 in the Bridgend and Cowbridge Union, and in that of Pembroke, was 2.0 and 2.9 respectively, it stood at 4.7 and 5.0 respectively in the Narberth and Haverfordwest Unions. The same relationship between the prevalence of pauperism and the weakness or total absence of benefit organisations is traceable in other parts of Wales. Nowhere are labourers more indifferent to the advantages of Friendly Societies than in Anglesey (where malingering had a large share in destroying such clubs as did exist), and in that county the percentage of outdoor paupers amounts to 4.6 and 5.6 in the Anglesey and Holyhead Unions respectively. Comparatively little use of clubs is also made among the labourers of the Pwllheli Union, where the outdoor paupers number 4.6 per cent. of the population.

But neglect of benefit organisations is only one of

many factors in the production of pauperism—such as intemperance and immorality—while I need not tell you that much also depends on administration. It would therefore be rash to generalise too freely on the subject, and I will therefore limit myself to a few tentative observations with reference to Friendly Societies.

I have come to the conclusion that, broadly speaking, benefit societies flourish most in those districts of rural Wales where Nonconformity is least dominant. It is something more than a mere coincidence that so few labourers belong to clubs in North Pembrokeshire and West Carmarthenshire—a very stronghold of the Baptists and Independents in South Wales—and still fewer perhaps in Anglesey and Western Carnarvonshire, where three-fourths of all the population are Methodists. And the explanation which I offer for this is that, in nine cases out of ten, the meetings of the clubs were at least until recently always held in public-houses. Moreover, in many clubs, every member was formerly allowed a pint of beer on paying his subscription, while in others as many pints of beer were drawn as were members on the roll of the club. Those who held office at the chapels would therefore rarely encourage any church members to join a society which would necessitate periodical visits to the public-house, and place before them opportunities for acquiring a taste for drink. The cause of thrift may have lost much in consequence, but morality generally has probably gained much more. The Rechabite Association has had such success of recent years in North Pembrokeshire as well as in some other parts of Wales, *e.g.*, Merioneth, because, as a temperance organisation, it has at least the tacit sanction and frequently the active support of the more influential Nonconformists. It therefore seems to me, that if Benefit Societies are to become more popular and flourishing in rural Wales, they must be first of all rid of the taint of the public-house.

In South Glamorgan, it is true, Oddfellows' Halls are to be found at Wick and Llantwit Major, while at St Athan's club meetings are held in the schoolroom. The latter arrangement could be resorted to in most villages, even if the various Parish Councils cannot yet be expected to provide village institutes to be placed at the disposal of the club once a month. But the change suggested should not be allowed to weaken the social and recreative possibilities of benefit organisations, which need to be enlarged and developed so as to render more attractive these societies, and make their meetings "friendly" in fact as well as in name. One way of doing this would be to associate with each local society, or perhaps group of branches, some of the numerous local *eisteddfodau* and literary gatherings (*cyrddau llenyddol*) which are so frequently held in all parts of rural Wales.

I do not grudge the members of a society their annual dinner and "turn-out," but to dine together is not an act that specially appeals to the Welsh mind, nor has it the merit of educating outsiders as to the real objects and advantages of a club. The dinner might, however, be supplemented and occasionally replaced by an *eisteddfod* or similar gathering, held under the direct patronage of the club. The responsibility for organising the gathering would be assumed by a mixed committee, so that none of the club's funds should be drawn upon to make good any deficit that might result. At least a share of the profits might be handed over to the club, but its chief gain would be the interest created and support enlisted by its participation in such proceedings. It was by these means that the Oddfellows and Ivorites succeeded in establishing strong lodges in the chief towns and industrial centres of South Wales some forty or fifty years ago. If similar means were somewhat systematically adopted in rural districts, an opportunity would be afforded the more influential residents—landowners, clergymen, and farmers—to

show, by their presence or patronage, their appreciation of Friendly Societies, and as a further object-lesson, the names and subscriptions of the honorary members might be publicly announced after the fashion of a charity dinner.

These would be *public* methods for promoting clubs, but even more perhaps could be done *privately* if every employer of labour were to urge his men to join some good society, placing before them the example of his own membership—honorary or otherwise, as the case might be. Landowners might go even further by definitely requiring their labourers to belong to a club, and making it understood that, in case of temporary illness (certified by club doctor), they would add to the labourer's sick pay as much as it would be short of his usual wages. This is done, I believe, by Sir Joseph Bailey and Mr Marshall Dugdale, to give only two instances.

But whatever is done, the first essential is that the society be based upon an actuarially sound basis, and for this there is at present no public or official guarantee of any kind. Most of the clubs that come to a bad end do so owing to a bad beginning, and hitherto the Government has abstained from undertaking the responsibility of any effective censorship of the tables which a society may wish to adopt. The big organisations, such as the Oddfellows, would object to such interference, but the chief objection, I think, is the enormity of the work, which would require a staff of experts as large, but not larger, than factory inspection involves. The audit of accounts and the periodical valuations are also on a very unsatisfactory footing at present, and with reference to work of this kind, perhaps the County Councils might with advantage be empowered to exercise some supervision, through their treasurer or some other official, though in the long run it may be that the bolder course of extending the powers of the Chief Registrar would be the wiser remedy. Meanwhile the better educated members of

the community can do much good by giving friendly counsel, as opportunity occurs, as to the management of clubs in their neighbourhood, and especially the investment of their funds. Anything that would tend to promote the amalgamation of local clubs into a strong county society would also be a very distinct gain.

There is, so far as the rural labourer is concerned, one somewhat serious drawback in the relief schemes of most Friendly Societies: their members become entitled to relief only in the event of a sickness totally incapacitating them from all work. But what about hale and hearty octogenarians who would feel their days drag wearily unless allowed to take up some light task occasionally? Their case should, I think, be also met by the more general provision of pensions, to commence at a fixed age, say seventy-five, or earlier. The man who lives to that age is very often one who has not perhaps had a week's illness in his life, and has not drawn a penny of sick pay, and societies should, I think, provide, on a proper actuarial basis, for the payment of small pensions to such members, in proportion to the excess of their in-payments over their apportioned liability to the sick fund. It would be somewhat like the Tontine system in life insurance. On this might be further grafted a scheme enabling members, when capable of increased subscriptions, to provide a fund for their widows and children. The possibility of this tripartite arrangement may perhaps be more clearly understood if I quote to you the rules of the Hampshire Friendly Society with reference to deposits. They are as follows:—

(1.) The members receive back annually to their own private account or deposit, also called their Rest, whatever sums remain over from the common sick fund, after providing for the above objects, of sick, old age, and medical allowance, and they thus have all the advantages of a sharing club without its risks.

(2.) They may put in to their own deposit or Rest any further sum they please, as into a savings-bank.

(3.) They may withdraw any sum they please from their deposit, as from a savings-bank.

(4.) Deposits receive interest, as in the P.O. Savings Bank.

(5.) The balance of the deposit remaining at a member's death is paid to whomsoever he appoints.

According to the rules of the United Counties Friendly Society, established by the late Mr Powell, a member may also effect a fourfold assurance, viz., (a) Sick pay, (b) annuities, (c) endowments payable in one sum at the end of any number of years, and (d) payments at death. But with one exception, separate payments, according to different tables, would have to be made in each of these four cases. The exception is that a member can assure sick pay until sixty-five or seventy, and a pension for life after that age, by means of the same monthly contribution. But very little use has apparently been yet made of this system. There is, however, a future for it,—and I may also express the opinion that from this time out the Post Office Savings Banks will be resorted to far more extensively in rural Wales than they have been in the past. This, in fact, is likely to be the result of those calamitous failures, including one or two of gigantic dimensions, which, in recent years, have, vortex-like, swallowed up the hard-earned savings of hundreds of labourers and small farmers in various parts of Wales. This bitter experience is teaching people how to appreciate the value of the Savings Banks, and to look for security rather than a high rate of interest for their little hoards of money. The instinct for thrift is an active one in the mind and character of the ordinary Welsh labourer: it requires encouragement, and should be protected from such serious shocks as these big failures have been.

I understand that from the orthodox Poor Law point of view the number of old people in receipt of relief in Wales is considered to be very large—pro-

portionately larger, I believe, than in similar English areas.

These numbers stare you in the face whenever you look at your annual returns, but I think the best way to bring home their real meaning is to take certain typical parishes, and analyse the condition, at the time of their death, of all persons over sixty years of age. I had intended collecting some statistics of this kind, but for various reasons was not able to carry out my project. I give you, however, two instances of what I mean. From information very kindly supplied me by the Rector of Llandyrnog, a typical rural parish in the Vale of Clwyd, I find that the total number of persons over sixty years of age buried in the parish churchyard during the last twenty years, or from July 1875 to December 1896, amounts to 124, being 66 males and 58 females. More than one-third of that total, namely, 43, were paupers at the time of their death, 24 of them being females and 19 males. In the earlier years the male paupers are comparatively few, but latterly they were even more numerous than the females.

Similar information has also been kindly sent me by the Vicar of Talley, in Carmarthenshire, covering a period of ten years only, *i.e.*, from January 1887 to January 1897. Omitting 7 sexagenarians whose condition at death was unknown to the Vicar, as they were non-parishioners, his total was 59 persons over sixty years, *viz.*, 29 males and 30 females. Eighteen, or a little less than one-third, of these were paupers, 11 being females and 7 males. The slightly lower proportion in Talley may be due to the existence of a Women's Club and two excellent Men's Clubs, of one of which I may mention I have the honour to be myself a member.*

* The Rector of Lampeter Velfrey, Pembrokeshire, also furnished me with a list of his burials, but as only nine persons over sixty years of age had been buried in that churchyard during the last twelve years, the number was too small to analyse and draw any inference from.

That in Llandyrnog nearly 35 per cent., and in Talley, 30 per cent. of the aged folk above sixty years of age should die in a condition of pauperism seems to be too high a proportion to be at all satisfactory, and so far as I can see the only reasonable inference to be drawn therefrom is that under existing conditions, and with the present system of payment partly in cash and largely in kind, it is practically impossible for the ordinary labourer to save enough to provide for a prolonged old age. To do this effectually, too early a beginning can never be made. "The child is father to the man," and old age is heir to the habits of youth. Teach the young man to save his earnings, and you need have no great fear about his condition in old age. And it is those young unmarried men who are hired as indoor servants that of all agricultural wage-earners have far and away the best opportunities for saving; but their treatment as to sleeping and living accommodation is so much that of the mere animal that it is difficult for them to know what self-respect is, and without self-respect, young men, in whatever station of life, are always in danger of "going to the dogs." If these young men were treated better, there would not be so great a difficulty to induce them to join Friendly Societies, to use the Savings Banks, and to cultivate habits of thrift generally.

As to married labourers, I may repeat the opinion that, first, the men who are paid in cash, and live on their own finding, and, secondly, those who have a few acres of land attached to their cottages, are in a better position to make some provision for the future than either the landless men or those who receive their food in part payment of their wages.

And here I break off—abruptly, as you may doubtless think. I think it better that my remarks should have an abrupt ending, as my account of the labourer is only a tale half told. I have not attempted to exhaust the subject; much still remains to be said.

Nor do I intend to draw a series of precise conclusions from the facts I have dealt with. There is danger in generalising unless you have surveyed the whole field.

Least of all have I any heroic remedies to suggest. The best remedies are often very near to us, and quite too commonplace for many reformers. Such, to a large extent, is, I think, the case with what is called the problem of the agricultural labourer in Wales.

DISCUSSION.

Rev. R. J. LLOYD (Newcastle-in-Emlyn) said he had much pleasure in expressing his deep satisfaction at Mr Lleufer Thomas's excellent address. In his own Union the labourers were very poor, but they were an excellent class of men, and worked very hard. They went away to the industrial centres, and the labour market in his own locality was not by any means congested. They ought to urge the people to join Friendly Societies, which must, however, be managed on an actuarial basis. With regard to wages, he thought it would be much better that the labourer should be paid wholly in cash. He would be glad if the labourer could always hold his cottage direct from the owner instead of the farmer. He did not wish to say anything against the farmers, who were a good set of men, but he must say that with full cash payment of wages and tenancy direct from the owner the labourer would be much benefited. (Hear, hear.)

Mr CROSS (Cardiff) said that he did not happen to belong to a rural Union, but had had considerable experience in Friendly Society work. He was especially pleased with the suggestion that employers should first of all join such societies, and induce the men to join. The cause of failure of Friendly Societies was not so much embezzlement as mismanagement. They paid in on one table and paid out on another, and gave their sick members much more than they were entitled to, and thus they were broken up. Societies of this kind could not succeed unless they were managed on sound business principles.

Dr J. G. LEWIS (Swansea) especially endorsed what had been said with reference to rural parishes. If a labourer was paid as Mr Lleufer Thomas stated, partly in food, he would only, if earning fifteen shillings a week, take home eight or ten shillings. He (the speaker) could remember when the labourer only took home about three shillings, and yet managed to keep himself, his wife and family, and pay the rent. How could a man so circumstanced do anything but go on the parish sooner or later? (Hear, hear.) He did not blame the farmer, who could not pay more at that time—the rents were too

high. (Hear, hear.) Before they got the labourers to join Friendly Societies, and before they got the country into a healthy state, they would have to get the rents reduced. (Hear, hear, and laughter.)

Mr HOPKIN JONES (Neath) said that in his Union the practice had been to encourage people to join the Friendly Societies. The Guardians investigated every case thoroughly, and one of the questions always put was, "Are you in a Club?" and those applicants who were in a Club were much more liberally dealt with than others. This course was well known, and had had the effect of greatly increasing Club membership in the Union.

Mr R. H. BUCKLEY (Narberth) said that having regard to the wages paid in the agricultural districts, he did not see how they could call upon the labourers to join Friendly Societies. They could not do so, at any rate, until they had got some of their children out in the world. As a whole, the status of the agricultural labourer had vastly improved in recent years. He could look back over many years, and it seemed to him that if the labourers received less money in years gone by they had happier homes, and always managed to have a good fat pig every year. They did not now, and why? Some said it was because their wives were extravagant in dress, but he did not think that was the reason. There was not the same amount of thrift among the labouring classes as there was formerly. When persons who belonged to Benefit Societies came before him he always advised that they should have good relief. (Hear, hear.)

Mr F. T. BIRCHAM (Local Government Board Inspector) said he had been very much interested in Mr Lleufer Thomas's paper. Mr Thomas had, as the Chairman said, had exceptional opportunities of forming an opinion on the condition of the agricultural labourer, and he had the advantage of being a Welshman. With regard to thrift, it had always struck him as desirable that young fellows should have opportunities for amusement after they had done work. Idleness led to drink and all manner of impropriety. The farmers should set a good example in forming little societies in each district, and they might be sure that the labourers would follow them. (Hear, hear.) If Clubs were established even on the smallest scale in the rural districts it would have the most beneficial influence. Then occasional dancing and other rational amusement would be of the greatest possible benefit in raising the position of the agricultural labourers, and increasing their interest in life. The labourers would not then be found so anxious to get away in search of work elsewhere. (Hear, hear.) If village life was made more interesting to the young than it now was, there would be less migration to the towns.

The CHAIRMAN said he entirely agreed with Mr Lleufer Thomas that it was undesirable that men should be paid partly in cash and partly in kind, for there was always a temptation to the employer to make the kind as cheap as it could be made. He was glad to say that the system did not obtain in the Vale of Glamorgan where he lived, where too the wages were very good, rarely sinking below fifteen

shillings, and often going up to eighteen shillings a week. In some districts it was desirable that the farmers should let the cottages to the labourers, otherwise they might find the men going away to other employment, and have no cottages for their own hands. He thought it was a good plan for an owner to let some of his cottages himself, and allow the farmers to let some. His experience of Friendly Societies was that most lodges came to grief because they would not adhere to a strict actuarial table, and the inevitable result was bankruptcy sooner or later. There was one point about the Oddfellows that he had never been able to understand, and that was what was done with the funds of the Unity, many of the lodges being very rich and many very poor. There was an objection to meeting in public-houses, but in many places there was nowhere else to hold the meeting. (Hear, hear.)

Mr LLEUFER THOMAS thanked the meeting for the kind and indulgent reception of his paper. In fact the references had been so kindly that no reply in the strict sense of the word was required. He held that it was advisable that the labourers should have the power of bargaining with the farmer, and that it was not advisable that the farmer should have any pull on the man except what could be got in bargaining. No point was more clearly established before the Welsh Land Commission than that the relations between the farmers and the labourers were inequitable.

The Conference then proceeded to the consideration of papers by the Rev. J. R. Buckley and Miss Mason (Local Government Board Inspector).

THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF PAUPER CHILDREN :

A COMPARISON OF THE VARIOUS SYSTEMS IN VOGUE.

BY REV. J. R. BUCKLEY,

Vicar of Llandaff, and Vice-Chairman of the Cardiff Board of Guardians.

I SET myself to the difficult though pleasant and interesting task, which has been assigned to me, with the consciousness that I have nothing new to say, that I shall only be a gleaner after others in the field of an important inquiry, and that when I reach the end of my paper I shall have left the question unanswered, "Which of the systems now in vogue is the best?" Still I claim for the subject which I have

the honour to introduce to the Conference an interest which can never flag, however often it may have been discussed. Stale and unprofitable a debate upon the education and training of children can never be, when we think of the possibilities enshrined in a child, whether it be nursed in the lap of luxury or cast as a waif upon the ocean of life.

“What manner of child shall this be?” is a question which may well be asked with reference to those whom we call “Children of the State,” and of whom we are the responsible guardians; and the answer depends, not so much upon the circumstances of birth, as upon the training which they receive.

THE CHILDREN WHOM WE HAVE TO TRAIN.

It must be confessed that the material is not of the best or most promising kind—born, some of them, of vicious parents, with a hereditary taint in the blood, and with enfeebled constitutions, into homes where the sunshine of home happiness does not penetrate, and where the surroundings are unfavourable for moral and spiritual growth; deserted, as not a few of them are, revealing the sad fact that even the mother may become so hardened by sin as to forget her sucking child, and to cease to have compassion on the fruit of her womb; while among them are those whom the chill blast of adversity has driven into the Schools and Homes of our Unions.

NONE PREDESTINED TO A LIFE OF SIN AND VICE.

The material is not of the best description, but among these poor children of the State there is not one for whom the great Father of all does not care—there is not one who is predestined to a career of vice and crime. There is no reason why they may not be so trained as to contribute to the strength and prosperity of the country to which they belong, instead of being

allowed, through the want of culture, to swell the criminal and improvident classes. The popular phrase which is so loosely used, whether the children will turn out good or bad, suggests that their future is akin to a game of chance. But as everything which has life can be trained; there is no reason why these children, who are our special care, should not be so trained as to be fitted for positions of usefulness and happiness in the world. I think it was Dean Farrar who said, that, according to the training it received, the child would become like deadly nightshade or a plant of renown—like a desolating tempest or a refreshing breeze—like a firebrand in the hands of a maniac or like holy lightnings wielded by the strong angels of God. If this is true, then the training of our children is a matter of paramount importance, amply repaying all the care and attention we can give to it.

HAVE GUARDIANS RECOGNISED ITS IMPORTANCE?

I believe that Boards of Guardians everywhere are fully alive to the importance of the subject, while the presence of women of kind hearts and motherly instincts at our assemblies has done much to raise the question to a yet higher level.

No sufficient reason has been given, as I venture to think, why the care and training of the children should be transferred to any other body. I question whether it would be possible to find a body of men and women who would take a deeper interest in their welfare, devote more time or ability to the work of training the young, or perform it with greater efficiency.

But while I am not in favour of any change in the management of pauper children, I warmly support the suggestion that there should be a Special Department of the Local Government Board, called "The Children's Department," and I think it might be an advantage if our schools were placed under the Education Department for examination and inspection.

THE AIM TO BE KEPT IN VIEW.

Having spoken of the importance of this branch of our work, and expressed my conviction that it is realised by Boards of Guardians, I will now say a word as to the aim which, whatever system of training we adopt, should be kept in view. It is the effacement, from the mind and the daily life of the child, of the taint of pauperism. We must do what we can to make them forget the rock out of which they were hewn—to cancel, what I heard a speaker at the Cardiff Church Congress call, “the bar sinister”—and to place them on an equality with the children of the working classes, giving them an equal chance in the great battle of life, that they may quit themselves well and be strong.

I pass to

A REVIEW OF THE VARIOUS SYSTEMS IN VOGUE.

1. *The Workhouse*.—It was not unnatural in the infancy of the Poor Law that the Poorhouse should have been thought the fitting place for the pauper child as for its pauper parent. But it was soon discovered that of all training places for the young life, this was the worst. The child, beginning life in the Workhouse—taught to look upon it as his or her home—associating it with early memories, was nothing loath to return to it, when driven by necessity to seek a refuge in after-life. Besides the atmosphere of the Workhouse, its isolation, its routine, its discipline are all ill adapted to the moral and spiritual growth of the child. There may be “Pauper Palaces,” such as the one described by the inimitable pen of Charles Dickens. I have visited Country Workhouses where kind and tender-hearted officials do all they can to bring some rays of sunshine into the lives of the little ones entrusted to their care, but experience proves, that if it is necessary some should end their days in the dreary monotony of a Workhouse, it is not the place for the

culture of the budding life. Place the Cottage child and the Workhouse child side by side, and you see at a glance the superiority of the one over the other.

I shall probably be giving utterance to what all here to-day feel, when I say that it is desirable that children should be removed from the Workhouse at the age of three years, and placed under influences more favourable to their growth, physically, morally, and spiritually.

2. *Separate Schools.* — The unsuitability of the Workhouse, and its dire effects upon the young, led to the establishment of schools apart from the Workhouse. No one can doubt that this was a distinct step in advance, and the eulogy is well deserved which the Right Hon. A. J. Balfour paid to those who first realised, that unless you are to have a hereditary class of paupers, it is absolutely necessary to take the children away from the Workhouse, and to let them breathe a purer atmosphere—"Pioneers," he called them, in the path which Boards of Guardians are endeavouring to pursue.

The defects of the system have been brought to light in the evidence given before the Departmental Committee of the Local Government Board, and the massing of large numbers of children in these institutions finds few, if any, advocates to-day.

A Distinction between Two Classes of Schools.— But before you pass any condemnation upon this system, I think you must distinguish between two classes of these schools. They may become so large and unwieldy, with 1,000 or more children under the same roof, as to render individual care and oversight a practical impossibility; but it is quite possible to have a District School of 300 which is capable of being well managed, and of sending out children who are well equipped for the duties of life. The teaching in such an institution may be sound, good, and

thorough. The children may be as bright and happy as in any boarding school in the land. And there is no inherent necessity why ophthalmia should rest, like a terrible nightmare, upon it.

An Instance of a Good and Efficient District School.—No comparison can be drawn between the enormous schools, which have become overgrown institutions, and the Ely School, in which the Guardians of the Cardiff Union place their children.

Beautiful for situation, the school buildings are bright and airy. A Lending Library has been provided for the inmates. Healthful games, such as football and cricket, are encouraged, and the boys try their strength and skill with other teams. It is refreshing to note the smart appearance of the lads when there is a march-out of the Ely School Boys' Brigade, or to hear them sing at a meeting of the Band of Hope. The girls learn cookery from a practised teacher who is sent from the School of Cookery in Cardiff. In the school, in the playground, in the home life everything is done to brighten the lives of the children, and to fit them for the duties of life. Mr Bircham, our excellent inspector, whose interest in the welfare of the young is unceasing, said to me a short time ago, "Would you like to see the Ely Schools given up?" I felt constrained to reply, "I cannot yet say I would, and I question whether we should do better under any other system."

Still one must admit that the aggregate system has its disadvantage. Family life is impossible in an institution. The children live too much to themselves. They are a little community dwelling alone, knowing little and seeing little of the great outside world, on which they are launched when they reach the age of fourteen. There is the danger to their morals from the introduction among them of the unhappy class of children, who are familiarised with vice from their earliest years, when the father in gaol, or the mother

in the Workhouse, the children are sent to the Workhouse School.

3. *The Boarding-out System*.—A home for every homeless child, and that under precisely the same conditions of life as those of children born in happier circumstances—this is the essence of the Boarding-out system. All that can be said for and against the system has been said by one who, holding an official position, has used it with such evident love for children as to deserve the title of the Children's Friend. It would be presumptuous in Miss Mason's presence to criticise a system, of which, I believe, she has said, that at its best it is the best, and at its worst it is the worst of the various systems which have been adopted for the training of our children. The best, because it is the most natural, placing the child in a home, restoring it to the life which God, who created it, intended it should enjoy—the life which is the spring and fountainhead of all national life, and the life which fosters unselfishness and self-dependence, so essential to real success and usefulness in the world. Economy, too, can be urged in its favour. The cottage home is ready for its very inmate. No outlay on buildings is necessary. No staff of officials is required. You put the child in a home that it may be adopted into the family, and grow up to be a part and parcel of it, and you allow four shillings, or perhaps five shillings, for its maintenance and support. Ideally it is the best, but no one can read Miss Mason's Report on the Boarding-out of Pauper Children without seeing that the risks are serious. She points out the defects as faithfully as she gives prominence to the merits and excellence of the system. Looking at it from a parent's standpoint, I am fain to confess that I would rather know that my child was placed in a school among other children, under the direct supervision of a public body, than be placed in a home, where it might become a drudge or be treated unkindly by those who cared more for the addition to the weekly

wage than for the adopted child. This, it may be said, is a needless fear—the mothers of England have kind and loving hearts, and the little pilgrim soon loses the sense of loneliness and becomes one of the cottage circle. I believe that this is true in many instances. Let me give an illustration which gives point to it. Some years ago two girls, out of a large party whom I took to Clevedon on the occasion of an outing of the Girls' Friendly Society, missed the returning boat. I felt some anxiety for their safety, but a working-man's wife was on the pier, and seeing their distress, she took them to her own home. When I wrote to thank her, she replied: "I do not wish for thanks. I only did my duty. I am a mother." That is the spirit which animates thousands of mothers. But, alas! the ideal, home life is not perfect, and the success of the Boarding-out system depends upon the most thorough and constant supervision. It has another drawback, that it only partially covers the ground, and is applicable only to younger children. Of the two systems of Boarding out, that within and that without the Union, the latter has the advantage of removing children beyond the reach of unscrupulous relatives, and visitation by a committee of voluntary workers is preferable to that by a relieving officer, however kind and conscientious he may be.

"The truth is," says Mrs Townsend, "no system, however perfect in theory, can be at all times absolutely successful in practice. Even the divinely constituted ideal of the family is not always a success. . . . Nevertheless," she adds, "that system which approaches most nearly to God's own ordinance of home and family must surely be the one to aim at for the desolate and disinherited children with whom the State has to deal."

4. *Cottage Homes in Groups*.—The system of forming a Village Community by erecting Cottage Homes, each accommodating fifteen children (I do not

think the number ought to be more), under a foster-mother, with its school, its hospital, and its workshops, from which the children can attend church or chapel, has been tried with satisfactory results. We visit one of these villages, and our first thought is—Here is something which approaches very nearly to family life; here there is greater freedom than perhaps is possible in an institution.

In a Home of twelve or fifteen children the mother can know the character of each, and give to each the attention which it needs. If the village community is not too large—that is, if too many Homes are not grouped together—if the Home contains children of both sexes and of all ages, and if the foster-mothers are the right persons—it would seem to be difficult to find a better system than this.

The Bridgend Guardians have combined these advantages in their Cottage Homes, which, to my mind, are models of what such Homes ought to be. The drawback to the system is, that it may become too artificial, and that, as the Departmental Committee point out, “the village is composed not of all sorts and conditions of men and women, but of children of one class and their caretakers.”

5. *Cottage Homes Scattered*.—The latest system is that which originated in Sheffield, and is still on its trial, and has been adopted at Bath and elsewhere. One noteworthy feature of the system is that children over three years never enter the Workhouse at all. They are taken direct to the Receiving Home at the headquarters, and thence they pass into one of the Probationary Homes. These two Homes, together with a place of residence for the Superintendent and Matron, the offices, the stores, the hospital, form the headquarters of the Sheffield system. After a period of probation they are drafted into the Homes, which in appearance resemble other dwellings, and are scattered over a considerable area. Each Home has

accommodation for fifteen or sixteen children of both sexes and different ages, including the pet of the household, the baby. They attend an elementary school. They go on Sunday to church or chapel and to Sunday school, and join the Band of Hope in connection with their place of worship. The Homes scattered, like the Homes grouped, are not too large to make an intimate knowledge of each child an impossibility, while their advocates say they are superior to the latter in this respect, that they give the children an opportunity of mixing with other children, and thus of losing the "Workhouse taint" more effectually and completely.

The system also solves the religious difficulty, for children of the Roman Catholic faith are placed under foster-mothers of their own creed, and attend Roman Catholic Schools. Children who require special treatment are provided for, as well as the difficult class for whom officialism has invented the expressive name of "Ins and Outs."

The system is alluded to in the report of the Departmental Committee as one of high promise, but it is obvious that, as in Boarding out, good foster-parents and adequate supervision are of first importance, more necessary, as Mr Bircham shows, in "Scattered" than in "Grouped" Homes, for in the latter the foster-mothers are under the immediate supervision of the Superintendent and the Matron.

COST SHOULD BE SECONDARY TO EFFICIENCY.

In comparing these systems I have said nothing as to the comparative cost, because I believe that that system is, in the long run, the most economical which is best calculated to train outcast and deserted children to be good and useful members of society.

SUMMARY.

To sum up:—(1.) The institutional system, if it is kept within proper limits, may be made thoroughly

good and efficient, and send forth not mere "automata," but boys and girls whose heads and hearts and hands have been trained for life and its duties. It has the advantage over other systems of being more directly under the control of the Guardians.

(2.) The Boarding-out system approaches most nearly to family and home life, and, where the number of children is small, it is the best way of dealing with them.

(3.) The Grouped Cottage Homes create an atmosphere of home life, and the supervision is likely to be more thorough than where the Homes are many and apart from each other.

(4.) The Isolated Homes have the advantage of throwing the children more among other children, and of merging them in the common life of the district. I hesitate to say of any one system, "This is the best, and ought to be adopted everywhere." On the contrary, I believe there is an advantage in having a variety of systems working side by side, and it should not be forgotten that what suits one district may not be suitable for another.

If in any Union a system has been found to work well, and to produce good results, I should hesitate to exchange it for another. Experience teaches that each system has its merits and its drawbacks, and the secret lies not so much in the system we adopt as in the way in which it is administered. If we are careful in our choice of the persons who are placed in charge of our children, and they perform their duties, not in a dry, cold, hard spirit of officialism, but as men and women of warm, loving, sympathetic hearts — enthusiasts in the work in which they are engaged — then that system will be fruitful in good results. I think, too, that in the training of girls especially Guardians should welcome and encourage the aid of "banded womanhood" in the form of the Girls' Friendly Society, the Young Women's Christian Association,

and kindred organisations. Let every girl have a wise and discreet and loving friend to stand by her and sympathise with her, and we shall hear less of our girls joining "the vast army of those whose lost footsteps echo on the pavements of our large towns and cities." The key to the whole question lies, not so much in the system, as in bringing both the boys and girls under sound, healthy, Christian influences.

"Childhood shows the man, as morning shows the day," says Milton. Can we have a stronger motive to inspire us with the desire to train the children to whom we stand *in loco parentis* to become useful members of society, worthy citizens of this great country, and, above all, men and women who honour God and walk in the ways of godliness?

THE BEST METHODS OF BOARDING OUT.

BY MISS M. H. MASON,

Local Government Board Inspector.

NOTHING could have given me so much pleasure as your kind wish that I should attend this Conference, for I feel that it is coming home to my own country and people. You may not know that I was brought up, till I was nearly fourteen, in Carmarthenshire. My father and mother both spoke Welsh. The sight of these headlands, from the other side of this bay, was part of my childhood itself, and I could never cease to feel that I was a Welsh "plentyn fach."

I do not propose in this paper to deal with the relative merits of the various systems of education under the Poor Law. My subject lies within the very narrow limits of the consideration, not of the Boarding-out System as compared with others, but taking the

Boarding-out System for granted, how best to carry it out.

There are two kinds of boarding out—

1. Beyond the Union.
2. Within the Union.

As no doubt you know, an order of the Local Government Board was issued in 1870, by which it became for the first time legal to board children out beyond the limits of the Union to which they are chargeable. In this case they must be sent to a Voluntary Committee of unpaid persons, some of whom must be, and most of whom are, ladies, who must be officially authorised both individually and collectively by the Local Government for the supervision of the children. Before any Committee is thus authorised, they must all sign a form of engagement to keep the regulations of the Local Government Board, and any member who may be added later must also sign a form to the same effect. These Committees are now authorised to board children out only within limited areas, consisting of certain defined parishes. The Guardians must in every case enter into a formal agreement with the Committee as to rates of payment, &c., and this agreement must receive the sanction of the Local Government Board. With this sanction, any Board, or Boards, of Guardians may send children to any certified Committee in England or Wales. The Committee undertake the finding of the homes; and the entire supervision of the children and the payments to the foster-parents are made through them by the Guardians. The Committee have to appoint one of their number to act as Secretary in their correspondence with the Local Government Board and the Guardians. The Committee are bound to hold meetings at least quarterly, visit the children at least every six weeks, inspect them in their homes, and report to the Guardians on every child and home at least once a quarter.

In 1889 a Within Unions Order was issued, enabling Guardians, if they please, to dispense with the inspection of the Relieving Officers, and place the children instead under the supervision of a Committee, or Committees, of Ladies within the Union. These Committees must be authorised by the Local Government Board in the same manner as Committees beyond the Union, and they undertake the selection of the homes and their supervision and that of the children in the same manner as Committees beyond the Union. In both cases the Guardians retain the control of the children, and the power of retaining them in, or removing them from, their homes.

The Committees both beyond and within the Union are kept up to their numbers by the Local Government Board, to whom they are bound to send returns of the names and addresses of all their members every January and July. If the number of these supervisors falls off, the Local Government Board write and ask them to fill them up by enlisting fresh persons. If any unauthorised person is added, the Local Government Board write to inquire about him or her, and, if found to be apparently suitable, this person is authorised individually, by the Local Government Board, as an added member.

It should be made quite clear that a Ladies' Certified Boarding-out Committee of Supervision is quite a different thing from a Boarding-out Committee of Guardians. Committees of ladies are intended for the purpose of supervising the children, and should reside near the cottages where the children are boarded out. Though the Guardians may select and enlist these ladies, their names must, in every case, be submitted to the Local Government Board, who alone have the power of authorising them as a Boarding-out Committee responsible for the children.

A Guardians' Boarding-out Committee is intended to select and send the children to the Ladies' Board-

ing-out Committee, or Committees, and receive and deal with the reports from the Ladies' Committees. No authorisation of the Local Government Board is required for such a Boarding-out Committee of Guardians, which the Board of Guardians can appoint themselves, like any other committee, from their own number.

There is nothing to prevent some of the Guardians themselves from being on the Certified Visiting Committees; but, in my experience, it is better not. It is better that Supervisors and Guardians should be separate bodies, so that the Guardians may be independent judges, and act as a check and court of appeal. It is much better that they should not be the actual supervisors, and that if they visit the children it should be in the independent capacity of Guardians or Inspectors.

Whether Boarding-out is carried out within or beyond the Union, every one agrees that two things are necessary—(1) Careful selection of the homes and foster-parents; and (2) Careful supervision and inspection of them afterwards. No one disputes this; but the question is, What are proper selection and supervision?

1. SELECTION.—Few people (strange to say there are a few) will deny that the foster-parents should be of respectable character (or, rather, some persons have very extended notions as to the kind of conduct that may be called respectable). This, however, is not all. They should be possessed of sufficient means not to depend upon the children's payments for a living. The presence or absence of other children in the house must be considered, and there may not be more than five in all. It is not usually a good plan to place children where there are young babies, as they are apt to be used as nurses and drudges rather than as children of the house. Nor is it wise, as a rule, to place boys with widows or single women, as they grow

out of control. They are better placed where there is a man. Houses where lodgers are received are not, as a rule, desirable; and where the family consists, or is to consist, of a married couple and both girls and boys, three bedrooms are necessary for the proper separation of the sexes. Now, if each of us were to think of the houses, one by one, in whatever village we know best, we should find that those where all these conditions are fulfilled, and where, in addition, the occupiers are willing to board children, are few and far between. Those who urge boarding out on a wholesale scale, and state that good homes are to be found everywhere and in large numbers, are either ignorant of country life or wilfully shut their eyes to facts.

The Burton-upon-Trent Guardians have had the following form of questions drawn up, to be filled in with regard to every proposed home. They have been kind enough to let me have it published* for the use of other Boards of Guardians, to whom I always recommend it. It is always best to have the particulars set down in black and white. (*See next page.*)

2. PROPER INSPECTION.—But though a home may be thoroughly well chosen, and the foster-parents long and intimately known as of excellent character, there is no saying beforehand how any one will turn out in his or her treatment of the children. Besides, it should be remembered, there are likes and dislikes between children and grown-ups, and where one may suit another may not. It is easy to be kind to a child you are fond of. It is not so easy when the child is naughty, troublesome, or disagreeable in its habits. It then requires much patience and a strong sense of duty to deal with it properly. You cannot tell how any foster-parents will act till they are tried, and if you are to board out only perfect children, the system must be very inadequate.

* Published by Messrs Knight & Co., 90 Fleet Street, E.C.

THE

BOARDING-OUT COMMITTEE.

*Particulars respecting the Home in which the Committee
propose to place*

Aged

Years.

- 1.—Christian and surname of foster parent.
- 2.—Age.
- 3.—Residence.
- 4.—Married or single.
- 5.—Widower or widow.
- 6.—Religious persuasion.
- 7.—Occupation.
- 8.—Wages.
- 9.—Name of employer.
- 10.—If from home at night.
- 11.—Earnings of children or other members of the family.
- 12.—Rent of house.
- 13.—Number of rooms in the house.
- 14.—Number of bedrooms.
- 15.—Number of beds in each.
- 16.—Number of persons sleeping in each room and bed.
- 17.—Is the child to have a separate sleeping room? If not, what sleeping accommodation is provided?
- 18.—How far is the house from the nearest public elementary school?
- 19.—How far is the house from the residence of the nearest member of the Boarding-out Committee?
- 20.—Are any other children boarded out in the home, and if so, how many, and what are their ages and sex?
- 21.—Are any of the foster parent's own children residing in the home, and if so, how many, and what are their ages and sex?
- 22.—Are there any adult lodgers in the house?
- 23.—Number, names, and ages of any other persons living in the house, not mentioned above.
- 24.—Has the foster parent had boarded-out children before, and if so, for how long?
- 25.—Has the foster parent ever been in receipt of Poor Law relief? If so, when, and for how long?
- 26.—Is there any person living in the house in receipt of Poor Law relief?
- 27.—Is the foster parent and are all other inmates of the house sober, honest, and of otherwise good character?

Signed

Secretary of the above-mentioned Boarding-out Committee.

Dated

One of the best instances I can give you was one in Devonshire, where a girl of four was placed with a small farmer and his wife, well-to-do people, who took her, not for profit, but as a companion to their only child, a girl of about the same age. The foster-parents were not merely respectable, but were looked up to as models to the parish, and were foremost in all that was done for its benefit. They were regular church-goers and communicants. The clergyman placed his own child with them at a time when his wife was ill, and said to me himself of the man that he regarded him as a brother. Yet these people ill-treated their foster-child continuously, and to such an extent that her screams at last caused the invasion of the house by the neighbours, and she was found a complete mass of bruises, and tied to the bed-posts by her thumbs, which were cut through in her struggles.

The foster-parents were both sentenced to a term of imprisonment, and the clergyman and other leading persons in the place wrote a statement to the effect that they were the last persons of whom such conduct could have been expected.

Not one person, but every one, says to me, "Yes, I dare say such things may happen elsewhere, but it is not possible here, where we know the foster-parents so well." I could give you any number of instances where persons who have said this to me have been amazed and shocked at circumstances which I have afterwards discovered.

Now, how are we to prevent such abuses? We can never prevent them altogether; but by thorough inspection we can discover them before they have gone far, and can remove the child to a better home.

Every one agrees that proper inspection is necessary, but in fact comparatively few people know what thorough inspection really is. The gentlemen present will, I hope, not misunderstand me when I say that it can only be carried out by ladies. I am not one of

that class of persons who are so fond of comparing men and women to the advantage of the latter. In my experience men and women are much alike, taken generally, and men and women both differ alike in character individually. My reason for saying that women only can inspect thoroughly is not because I think women better or sharper than men, but because there are certain things which it is quite proper for a woman, and most improper for a man to do.

For myself, I always take off or lower the girls' frocks so as to see whether their bodies are clean, and whether they are free from bruises. If children are beaten, it is generally with a hard stick on the upper part of the arms or shoulders, and generally on the left side, because those who whack them in temper seize them, facing them, with the left hand, and strike them with the right. I also turn up the girls' petticoats to see what underclothing they have on, and take off at least one boot and stocking to see their condition, and whether the child has been washed or not. I make the same examinations also in the case of boys; and it must be evident that while there can be objection to a lady's thus inspecting boys, it is impossible for a gentleman to do the same in that of girls.

It is, as a rule, only actual experience of the revelations produced by this kind of bodily inspection of the children which convinces any one of its necessity. It is so difficult to believe that a child one may see constantly, even daily, with a clean tidy outside and a rosy smiling face, and boarded out with a well-known and trusted neighbour, may, under its nice frock or suit, hide a skin encrusted with dirt of months or even years' standing, or be beaten black and blue. Yet such cases I have found over and over again, and it is only this sort of inspection that shows up those foster-parents who attempt to deceive by a fair outside and protestations of affection or virtuous sentiments. Any one can see when a child is openly

neglected or ill-treated. Those are not the worst cases, nor those we have so much to guard against, as those who deceive by a plausible exterior and behaviour.

I commend to your attention the rules of the Clifton Boarding-out Committee, which the Local Government Board have had printed for me to give to others if they desire it. The Clifton Committee also use this card,* which they give to each foster-parent, to show her what kind of inspection to expect. I do not myself care about the card. No foster-parent who is doing her duty resents thorough inspection, which only does her justice. The card is really of more use in encouraging the ladies to carry out inspection, which is often nervous work to them. I have seldom found a lady dictatorial or inconsiderate to the foster-parents. I find them very often timid and afraid of them. They think that a Government Inspector has more authority than themselves, and that these inspections are therefore easier for me than for them. But this is not so. The Committees can remove the children from foster-parents who refuse to submit to inspection, while the Inspector cannot do so, and can only report. The Committee has full authority. Many Committees of Ladies have, I am glad to say, adopted my own methods of inspection, and none of them have found that foster-parents who are doing their duty resent it. On the contrary, they say it is what they would wish to be done for their own children if left orphans, and the more thoroughly their ladies carry out their duties, the more they respect and praise them. It was a dying mother, a working-man's wife, who begged me, on her death-bed, to inspect in the manner I do. I gave her my promise, and have kept it.

Quite lately a case occurred where a lady guardian wished to board out two little boys with a particular

* *Card for Foster Parents*, published by Messrs Eyre & Spottiswoode, East Harding Street, Fleet Street, London, E.C.

couple in the neighbourhood of Bristol, and proposed that they should be placed under the supervision of the Clifton Boarding-out Committee, to whose admirable rules I have referred. The foster-parents objected to the rules and thorough inspection of that Committee, and the lady guardian took their part, and placed the children with them on non-resident out-relief, visiting them herself in the ordinary superficial manner. The reason for the foster-parents' objection to thorough inspection now seems clear. They have recently been prosecuted by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and fined for ill-treatment of their foster-children. After punishing these little things in every other way they could think of, to cure them of dirty habits, they finally blistered their backs with mustard.

As I have tried to show, ladies only can inspect the children's bodily condition, and therefore I think they should never be boarded out except under the supervision of a Committee of Ladies.

I am myself in favour of boarding out beyond the Union rather than within it, for several reasons. Within the Union there is a very natural tendency to board the children with their own relations, partly because more affection is expected from them, and partly because it seems cheaper, because they will usually take them for less. But in reality it is more costly in the long run, for persons who would otherwise have taken children of relatives for nothing will not do so if there is a prospect of obtaining some payment. In one Union I know, the boarding-out system was started for the express purpose of boarding out a family of orphan children with their uncles and aunts. The immediate result was that about ten or twelve other persons, who had up to now been maintaining little nephews or nieces, at once informed the Guardians that they should throw them on the rates unless they received payment for them as boarded out.

In cases where the children's relations are unsatisfactory, the farther they are removed the better.

Local interest is one of the difficulties of boarding out, both within and beyond the Union. Children are not infrequently boarded out for the sake of the benefit of their payments to local friends or favourites as foster-parents. This is one of the difficulties I have sometimes to contend with when I recommend the removal of an ill-treated or neglected child. The Boarding-out Committee sometimes oppose the removal in the interests of the foster-parent. This difficulty is doubled within the Union, for the foster-parent may not only be a favourite of the local supervisor, but a constituent of the Guardian elected for that parish. Every Guardian knows the pressure brought upon him to grant out-relief to cases in his parish or ward. The same kind of pressure is brought to bear upon him in cases of bestowal or retention of foster-children.

Boarding-out Committees beyond the Union are also generally within smaller and more manageable areas than those, even if duly certified, within the Union, and are better organised. And further, though I am not properly the person to say so, Boarding-out Committees beyond the Union come under my own inspection, and, as an expert, I help and train them in their work, and they apply to me in any difficulty; whereas there is no such official inspection of Boarding-out Committees within the Union, and no expert to help them. Many Guardians, as well as within Union Committees, have applied to the Local Government Board for my inspection and assistance; but it has always been refused on the ground that my own work of inspection beyond the Union is more than sufficient for me. The Local Government Board are quite right in this. Yet ladies surely need training within the Union as much as beyond it, and I cannot help sympathising with those who, like yourselves, desire to place their boarding out on a thoroughly satisfactory basis.

I can quite understand that Guardians may like to retain the children boarded out under their own eye within the Union, and there is also the objection of the cost of journeys in sending the children to a distance ; yet the reasons I have given for boarding out beyond the Union more than counterbalance those against it. I speak from experience, as I shall show later.

Boarding out beyond the Union is therefore the best system, and I always keep by me a list of those Committees most likely to be suitable for the numerous Boards of Guardians who apply to me in the matter.

But if circumstances should make it impossible or impracticable to board out beyond the Union, I may perhaps show how best to administer the system within the Union.

Above all things the children should be inspected, as I have described, by a Committee of Ladies. I am not among those sentimental persons who object to the visits of the Relieving Officer on the ground that they bring with them the contamination and "taint of pauperism." On the contrary, I am acquainted with many Relieving Officers whom I respect highly, and whose visits to myself would give me great pleasure. But I object to inspection of boarded-out children by Relieving Officers, because, being men, they cannot inspect the bodily condition of girls in the manner I have described, and it would be wasteful and troublesome to have two sets of persons going over the same ground—perhaps to the same houses, one to inspect the girls and the other the boys.

The children should, therefore, be visited by ladies, and if the ladies are to be of any real use they should be duly authorised, as a Boarding-out Committee, and kept up to their numbers, by the Local Government Board—in the manner now provided for by the Within Unions Order of 1889, as I have described. If the area of the Union is large, two or more Committees are still better. The moneys

should be handed over to the Certified Committees, and the payments to the foster-parents made by them instead of the Relieving Officers. Unless you make the ladies really and solely responsible for the children, they will not take a real interest in them, and you will find them flag in zeal and drop off. For some years before my official appointment, and before the Order of 1889 permitting the authorisation of Committees within the Union, I organised and carried on a system of visitation of the children by ladies, in addition to the Relieving and Medical Officers, in five out of the eight Unions in Nottinghamshire. What could seem better than so much inspection and so many safeguards? Yet the result of this divided responsibility was, that the ladies did not feel themselves possessed of any real authority, which was thrown upon the paid officers only. In three Unions the ladies by degrees altogether ceased their visits—so far that in one Union they have been altogether forgotten, and the guardians are at this moment proposing to start an uncertified visiting Committee of Ladies on the same footing, as a new thing, although it was tried some years ago and failed. In another Union they have done better, for they have started two Committees of Ladies for different parts of the Union, which have been authorised by the Local Government Board. In one of the other Unions the Guardians and Relieving Officers quarrelled with some of the ladies. And in fact, the Relieving Officers may, though unreasonably, take offence if the ladies find out abuses by methods which they, as men, could not employ. In every case the ladies feel that they have not enough authority to inspect properly, and though some continue to take an interest in the children, it does not go far.

What I have said with regard to the Relieving Officers, however, scarcely applies to the Medical Officers. It is not only desirable, but necessary, that the children should receive medical attendance, and the visits of the Medical Officers can be retained in the

usual form so long as it is made clear that it does not relieve the ladies of their responsibility ; or an arrangement can be made by which the doctors shall visit when required.

Give therefore to the ladies full power and authority, and they will feel their responsibility, and will be more likely to properly carry out the duties of inspection which they have voluntarily undertaken. And more, you will not only secure gratis their negative services as inspectors to detect abuses, but their positive services as friends of the children whom they feel as belonging to them. My twelve years' official experience is that these responsible Committees of Ladies on the spot befriend the children in every possible way. They look after their education and moral and religious training, encourage them by giving them prizes, books, toys, and all kinds of treats—sometimes teach them themselves ; look after their clothing, cleanliness, and health, their beds, and sleeping arrangements, and all else. I know one who, through the cold of last winter sat up night after night with a dying child. Could any Inspector from a distance, or any Relieving Officer do that? And last, but not least, as a rule they find situations for the children when of proper age, and continue to look after them when in service, and prevent their return to the Union between situations.

But little or none of this care did I obtain, or will you obtain from ladies, if you do not give them authority and responsibility.

The work of ladies is nowadays so much the fashion that, on the whole, I think it needs no advocacy ; but rather caution is required in enlisting it ; yet I find that in some few places there still exists a certain fear of the undue interference of ladies. To those who, for this reason, object to giving them the responsibility of the supervision of boarded-out children I would point out that it in reality is a safeguard.

When ladies visit the children irresponsibly, as a supplement to the Relieving Officer, they think it very

kind of them to do anything, and they are practically your patronesses. But when you give them the responsibility, and make them also your paymasters, they become practically your honorary officers. They are bound to furnish the guardians with quarterly official reports on the children—the best report form being that drawn up by the Burton-upon-Trent Guardians.* Although these Ladies' Committees are authorised only by the Local Government Board, the Guardians thus have a real hold over them, and have a right to demand that the duties they have undertaken shall be thoroughly and conscientiously performed.

The examples I have given in this paper of abuse are not intended to illustrate the dangers of the Boarding-out System, but the dangers of superficial inspection. With thorough inspection and supervision these dangers need not be apprehended, and I wish to make it quite clear that, according to my experience, it is not merely desirable, or better, to board children out under Committees of Ladies certified by the Local Government Board, but that it is absolutely necessary, in order to secure their proper treatment. Nor do I speak only of this necessity in the case of starting the Boarding-out System as a new thing in any Union. I mean that wherever children, even if only two or three, are already boarded out within the Union, or are on out-relief, either with relations or not, these children should be placed under the supervision of a Committee of Ladies (who might be enlisted by the Guardians or their friends) authorised by the Local Government Board. At Nottingham, a large town like Swansea, the Guardians board some of their children out under Ladies' Committees beyond the Union; but they have thirty or more boarded out within the Union and town—chiefly on out-relief—with relations. Last year they formed, with my help, a Committee of Ladies, which has since been authorised by the Local Government Board, to visit and supervise these children within the

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Union. This is an example which might be followed with advantage in every Union, whether urban or rural.

Wales is ahead of most parts of England in the matter of Cottage Homes, and I see no reason why it should not shine also in the formation, everywhere, of Ladies' Boarding-out Committees within the Union.

DISCUSSION.

Miss BROCK (Swansea) said she had been for four years a member of the Board of Guardians, and took great interest in the children. She knew comparatively little about boarding out, and had been very much engrossed with Miss Mason's paper upon it. She preferred the cottage homes, but had met many ladies of great experience who spoke well of boarding out, and she could not help feeling that there must be a great deal in it. She had heard a great deal that day, and often previously, about "hereditary taint." They talked a great deal too much about "hereditary taint." She was one of those who thought that little children were all very much alike. If they could go back far enough they would likely enough find a great deal of good in the ancestry of the children in their charge. (Hear, hear.) In her view each child was an individual in itself with extreme possibilities, and there was no reason on earth why one child should not turn out as well as another child. She did not think that any one was an exact reprint of any one else. When the children in the workhouses were naughty, and told stories, and were disobedient, like their own children, there was no need to wring their hands and declaim about the "hereditary taint." Let them train the children, and in that way crowd out any evil tendencies there might be in them. The children should be brought up as other children were brought up, but they must not be coddled; she did not mean that the children ought not to have everything done for them that could be done, but that they must be told that they were going out into the world, and they must impress upon them the sense of individual responsibility. (Hear, hear.)

Mr BEVAN (Cardiff) said that he was not at all convinced that the boarding-out system was a good system, except for small Unions and mainly in rural districts. However, he realised the advantages of the system if they could be certain that the children would be properly treated, but there was so much risk and danger according to the illustrations that Miss Mason had given that he felt altogether prejudiced against boarding out. Of course if they could be sure that the Ladies' Committee would carry out their duties thoroughly and would supervise the children without intermission, then they would all agree that it was the most natural and effective way of dealing with the children, but he confessed to a very great fear that

children had been often neglected and even maltreated. But he did not think that anything had occurred in recent years to justify the demand which was being made in some quarters that the care of the children should be transferred from the Guardians to other bodies. He did not speak of education, which was an altogether different matter, but of their control and maintenance. It was very important that the Local Government Board should carefully inspect the children from time to time, at the same time he did not think that there had been anything calling for their special intervention except in one or two instances. He felt strongly the necessity of putting pauper children upon a right footing as compared with other children, in regard to their clothing and surroundings. Why should the children have to go through the streets in garments that made them the occasion of particular observation by every passer by? (Hear, hear.) If questions of that kind (clothing, and the way that meals were served) were taken up and disposed of with spirit, it would be a great step in the right direction. (Hear, hear.) No matter what system was in vogue, the important thing was administration.

Rev. S. W. WILLIAMS (Chepstow) said that he was rather afraid that Miss Mason's paper would have the effect which it already seemed to have had, of bringing out too boldly the defects of the boarding-out system. In the Chepstow Union, which was large in area and small in population, they had adopted the boarding-out system with most satisfactory results. They had a Boarding-out Committee of about a dozen members, four or five of whom were ladies. In thinking over what Miss Mason said in her paper, he remembered that there were only two girls who were under the inspection of a man, and as clergymen were sometimes spoken of as old women, and that man was a clergyman, perhaps that did just as well. (Laughter.) But after what Miss Mason had said he would strongly urge upon the Committee that the two girls should be placed under the supervision of a lady member. (Hear, hear.) The boarded-out children were scattered over the whole district, and every child was under the direct superintendence of one or two members of the Committee, who were obliged to visit the child at least once a month. The system had been a great success in the Union. The ideal-foster parents were a childless husband and wife. They looked upon the child as their own, and, what was most essential, the child had a home to return to after it had gone out into the world. So many different children passed under the supervision of a Boarding-out Committee that it was impossible for the members of the Committee to keep in close touch with each child, whereas a foster-parent could always do so. They had a childless woman's application for a baby the previous week. She did not care whether it was a boy or a girl so long as it was young. They had one thirteen months old. No, it would not do; it was not young enough. They were now waiting for a child to be born, and as soon as it was born it

would have a home to go to. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) They paid only half-a-crown a week for each child, but they gave clothing in addition.

Mr W. J. NEVILL (Llanelly) said that boarding out might be best in some cases, and cottage homes in other cases. Mr Buckley did not touch upon one particular sort of child, the idiotic child. It was a difficult question how to deal with them, and he hoped he would have heard something about it. In every workhouse they went to they found such children, and it seemed very sad that nothing could be done to improve their condition. If there was a Children's Department at the Local Government Board, he trusted they would devote attention to this problem.

Rev. Canon EDMONDES (Bridgend and Cowbridge) thought it was a good thing that they should all try to say something on these occasions. There was too much of a tendency to meditate. A Conference could not go on unless people conferred. (Hear, hear.) The impression that had been left on his mind by the papers was that in the present condition of England and Wales all the systems were necessary. He would like to ask Miss Mason whether she considered that with the vast population which were gathered in some centres it was possible to deal with the children except by some modification of such a plan as existed at Ely, of which Mr Buckley spoke very favourably. He had known it himself some twenty-five years ago or more, when he was a member of the Cardiff Board of Guardians. It was impossible to have cottage homes sufficient for the needs of large populations, unless they had groups of cottage homes, and—*pace* Miss Brock—the doing away with the hereditary pauper would be less possible if they got a large aggregation of young people all of one type. He did not think it was necessary to go deeply into the question of the hereditary taint on the present occasion. (Hear, hear.) No system at present could be very well dispensed with. As he inflicted upon the Conference at Brecon a paper on cottage homes, he had no mind to dwell upon the subject now, but he endeavoured to impress upon his hearers then, and he would on this occasion, that in his opinion if cottage homes were to be a success they must keep them small. If they went beyond fifteen—(Mr BIRCHAM : Fourteen) — he said fifteen (laughter), they lost the family idea, and if they went beyond a dozen they ran considerable risk of it (hear, hear), because while families often ran to a dozen, it was quite the exception to find fifteen, eighteen, or twenty children at the same time in a single house—they did hear of triplets occasionally. (Laughter.) They lost the essence of the home if they made cottage homes too large. His advice was, keep the families in the homes as small as might be. (Hear, hear.)

Miss MASON said that she had to thank them for the kind way in which they had received her short and hurried paper. She carefully abstained from saying anything for or against the boarding-out system. She was herself very much in favour of it where it was well

done, but greatly against it where it was badly done. She referred more particularly to the selection of the homes and the methods of inspection. The proper methods of inspection would not have occurred to any one at first. Boarding out was said to be suitable for small Unions but not for large towns. All her boarding out was for the large towns. Most of the children she inspected were from London, and they were sent to Windermere, Devonshire, and elsewhere, the farther the better. If boarding out was carried on, the methods of inspection which she had indicated were absolutely necessary. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. J. R. BUCKLEY said there was nothing which called for a reply from him. He had only to thank them for their kind reception of his paper.

The CHAIRMAN said that he had received a letter from Mr Chance, the Honorary Secretary of the Central Conferences, asking the Conference to elect three members on the Central Committee.

Mr Henry Herbert (Llandilo Fawr), the Rev. Rhys Jones Lloyd (Newcastle-in-Emlyn), and Mr Bevan (Cardiff), were unanimously elected.

It was resolved on the motion of the Rev. J. R. BUCKLEY, seconded by Mr HERBERT LLOYD, that the Conference should in future be held annually.

It was decided, by thirty-one votes to fifteen (in favour of Llandrindod Wells), that the next Conference should be held at Langland Bay.

Mr HERBERT LLOYD proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman. Mr BUCKLEY (Narberth) seconded ; and, the proposition having been carried in acclamation,

The CHAIRMAN thanked the members, and the meeting terminated.

FRIDAY, 7th MAY 1897.

Rev. Canon EDMONDES presided. He urged those present to take part in the discussions, and not reserve their remarks for the more congenial atmosphere of the smoking-room. It was not necessary for him to anticipate in any way the discussion of Mr Hopkin Jones's paper on Overseers, nor was it necessary for him to attempt to follow their Chairman of the previous day in any general remarks on the Poor Law system. But there was one part of the duty of Overseers to which he did invite their attention. It was the duty of Overseers to distribute relief to people who were not in the work-houses, and that brought up to some extent the question of out-relief. He could not but feel, taking their own district, that some improvement might be effected in the carrying out of this particular form of relief. But the only way of accomplishing any reform would be by personal painstaking in the frequent revision of a great proportion of the cases. Some cases were, of course, perennial ; they went on for ever and ever, and it was not necessary to revise them.

Weekly meetings of the Guardians should be held in all but very thinly populated districts, and there was one other mode of checking outdoor relief which they had adopted in the Bridgend and Cowbridge Union. It was for the Chairman and some of the Guardians to visit during the summer months several centres and see the recipients of outdoor relief. Thus they saw the personal appearance of the recipients, heard whether they were regularly paid, how they were treated by the relieving officer and the medical officer, and whether the relief in kind was of good quality. (Hear, hear.) Various inquiries of that kind could be made, and in that way the Board got accurate information which it could not get when sitting in the Board-room. He was convinced that the fuller their inquiries were the more justice they were able to do to the poor on the one hand, and to those who had to support the poor on the other. Their duty as Guardians was to administer the law, not to dispense charity. There was an inclination among some Guardians in Wales to consider their duty as that of dispensing charity, not the administration of the law. If Guardians did their duty properly, it would tend to the good of the community at large.

Mr HOPKIN JONES (Chairman of the Neath Board of Guardians) then read a paper entitled

OVERSEERS: THEIR PAST HISTORY, PRESENT POSITION, AND FUTURE CON- TINUANCE.

BY MR HOPKIN JONES,

Chairman of the Neath Board of Guardians.

THERE is one merit attached to the office of Overseer, and as it is about the only one, I may as well start with it—the merit I refer to is that of antiquity. The office of Overseer was first established in the fourteenth year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth, 1572. Up to that time the duties had been discharged by the Churchwardens. The office of Overseer as it at present exists first came into force in the year 1601 by the Act of 43 Elizabeth.

The first section of that Act is rather interesting reading as showing the primitive state of things which

existed in England at that time as regards the relief of the Poor, and also showing the duties which the office of Overseer was supposed to entail. The section referred to provided that the Churchwardens of every parish, and four, three, or two substantial householders, should be nominated yearly in Easter week, or within one month after Easter, under the hand and seal of two or more Justices of the Peace in the same county. Their duties were set out, and a few of them are as follows :—

“To set to work the children of all such whose parents shall not by the said Churchwardens and Overseers be thought able to keep and maintain their children. To set to work all such persons, married or unmarried, having no means to maintain them, or to get their livelihood by (*in modern language, ‘Tramps’*). To raise weekly or otherwise by taxation of every inhabitant, *Parson, Vicar, and others*, and of every occupier of lands, houses, tithes, coal-mines, or saleable underwoods in the parish, in such competent sums of money as they should think fit, a convenient stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron, and other necessary ware to set the Poor to work.”

The Act goes on to provide that the Overseers shall meet together at least once every month in the Parish Church upon a Sunday afternoon after Divine Service, “there to consider of some good course to be taken and of some meet order to be set down in the premises.” They are also commanded to yield up to two Justices of the Peace within four days after the end of their year a true account of all moneys, received or rated and not received, and stock in hand and any other sums of money in their hands to pay over to the newly appointed Overseers.

A penalty of twenty shillings is by the Act imposed upon every Overseer who absents himself from the monthly meeting except through illness. This section has never been repealed, and it would be curious to

observe what the result would be if, in retaliation for prosecutions by Sabbatarians for Sunday Trading, the Anti-Sabbatarians sued for the penalties which Overseers are liable to under the latter Act for not attending the monthly meetings on Sunday afternoons. It is rather extraordinary that the Parson and the Vicar should be singled out from the general community for special mention.

I hope Parliament in those days did not hold such a poor opinion of the Parson or Vicar as to imagine that they would not pay their share of the money necessary to provide for the relief of the Poor unless specially mentioned in an Act of Parliament.

It will be seen from the list of duties of Overseers which I have referred to that they mainly consisted of the collection of rates and relief of the Poor, but in various other statutes other duties are cast upon them, principally the Burial of Dead Bodies cast upon the seashore, and the purchase of a Fire Engine for the parish. The general duty of relieving the Poor was carried out by the Overseers until 1834 when an alteration was made by 4 and 5 William IV., which provided that Guardians were to be appointed to administer relief, and since that time they have performed the duty. It had, however, been found necessary before this date to appoint persons to assist the Overseers in their duties, because in the year 1819, by 59 George III., powers were given to the inhabitants of any parish in vestry assembled, subject to the subsequent approval of the Justices, to appoint an Assistant Overseer.

This was largely taken advantage of, but the appointment did not become universal, and in 1844 an Act of Parliament was passed authorising the Poor Law Commissioners, upon the application of any Board of Guardians, in necessary cases to issue orders directing the appointment of paid Collectors of Rates. By the same Act of Parliament, Overseers were

relieved of another part of their duties by the appointment of Poor Law Commissioners, who were empowered to direct the Guardians to appoint paid officers for the general administration of the Poor Laws. Workhouses were established throughout the land, and Relieving Officers appointed to look after out-door Poor. Since that date, 1834, except in urgent cases, the only duties remaining to be performed by the Overseers have been shortly—(1) The making of Poor Rates; (2) Assisting the Assessment Committee in the valuation of property; (3) Relieving the Poor in urgent cases; (4) Superintending the Assistant Overseer or Collector of Rates in the collection of their rates; (5) Providing a Fire Engine for the parish; and (6) Burying Dead Bodies cast upon the seashore. Let us see whether they *have* performed or *continue* to perform these duties satisfactorily, and whether the Overseers as at present appointed should continue to exist. First, with regard to the making of Poor Rates; nominally the Overseers make the rate, and the Justices approve. In practice, however, this is not what is done. The Collector of Rates or Assistant Overseer prepares the rate, and it is approved of by the Vestry.

Overseers merely sign the rate, and it is then taken by the Collector or Assistant Overseer to the Justices for approval. For this part of their duty, at any rate, the Overseers' services can very well be dispensed with, and the signature of the Chairman of the Vestry would be a far better guide to the Justices as to whether the rate had been duly made and published than that of irresponsible and honorary officials. The next duty referred to is that of assisting the Assessment Committee. One would naturally suppose that in this branch of their duties they would or could render material assistance to the Assessment Committee. I think, however, that even in this branch of their duties they are of less use or worse

than of no use than they are in the making of rates. The Collector or Assistant Overseer generally attend, and upon the few occasions when the Overseer does attend, he does not do so for the purpose of assisting the Assessment Committee, but for acting as advocate for some friend of his own whose rates he wishes to reduce, or whose assessment he wishes to have placed at a low figure. The case is worse when the Overseer owns a lot of property in the parish. He assesses his own property at a low figure, and then in order to prevent these figures being attacked, he has to rate all other property in the same parish of a similar kind at the same amount as his own. The third duty which he has to perform is that of relieving the Poor in urgent cases. This was all very well at the beginning of this century, but there are now sufficient Relieving Officers and Medical Officers who all have power to relieve without the consent of the Guardians in urgent cases, and the Overseers are seldom if ever called upon in these cases. The fourth duty which the Overseer has to perform, and by far the most important one, is that of superintending the Assistant Overseer or Collector in the collection of the rates, and in the preparation and audit of his accounts. I am strongly of opinion that Overseers as at present constituted should not continue to perform this part of their duties. The Collector or Assistant Overseer has all the responsibility of the collection of, and accounting for, the Poor Rates; he has to make up all the accounts and do all the work. He has to give ample security for the performance of his duties, and he is appointed by a body of men who take the greatest care to secure the best candidate.

One would naturally expect that this responsible official would have the care and custody of the moneys collected. This, however, is not the case. As we all know, the Overseer is a person who can demand and receive the money, and the Collector is liable to

be reported to the Local Government Board if he does not pay to the Overseers £5 within a week of collection and £50 within a day of collection. If the Overseer remains in office, and a balance remains in his hands at the 25th March, he is simply debited with the amount, and it is carried forward. The effect of this is that the continuing Overseer can, by manipulating the accounts so that if a rate is made just before every audit, and by paying the collection from that rate as payment of the balance of the old rate, continue to have in his hands a large sum of money belonging to the parish. If the Assistant Overseer or Collector is dishonest, he has merely to induce the parishioners (a very easy matter with a Collector of Rates) to appoint a friend of his as Overseer, and in order to keep the balance in his hands, all he has to do is to get the Overseer to say that he has received the money. That this is not infrequently done the record of absconding Collectors and Overseers only too painfully shows.

There should be no delay in effecting some reform in the appointment and duties of Overseers. It may be said it is very easy to find fault, but more difficult to find a remedy. I agree; but so that it may not be said that I shirk any part of the subject, I venture respectfully to suggest for the consideration of this Conference, whether the following recommendations would not alter the existing state of things very much for the better.

A paid Overseer or Overseers should be appointed by the Guardians of every Union, who should be a man capable of assisting the Assessment Committee in the valuation of property, and also be a good accountant.

His duties shortly should be to assist the Assessment Committee in the valuation of property, and to see that the Collectors and Assistant Overseers prepared, collected, and accounted for the Poor Rates.

It should be his duty to see that the money collected should—£5 within a week and £50 within a day—be paid to the Treasurer. He should visit the Collector and Assistant Overseers at irregular intervals, in the same manner as surveyors do post offices, and check their accounts and balances. This would be a great check to defaulting Collectors, and the services of such a man as I have indicated would be of great value to the Assessment Committee. If, however, it were found that the office of Valuer and Overseer could not be combined, there would be plenty of work in most Unions for two or more officers. However much might be said in favour of the office of Overseer as it at present exists, it must be admitted that for efficiency the appointment I have suggested would be incomparably more advantageous. There are only three things left for the Overseers to do which I have touched upon, viz. :—Relieving the Poor in urgent cases, providing Fire Engine, and to Bury the Dead cast up on the seashore.

I have already stated that the Overseer is seldom if ever called upon to relieve, and if it should be necessary, surely the Guardian for the parish would be the most suitable person to deal with urgent cases. With regard to the burying of dead bodies cast on the seashore, the Relieving Officer attends to this at the present time, and it has been made a part of his duty.

With regard to providing Fire Engines, the Overseers have now had this part of their duty taken away from them, as the Parish Council in Rural Districts, or the Rural District Council, if authorised by the Local Government Board, and the Urban District Council in Urban Districts, have the power to provide Fire Engines. I have not shrunk from stating my opinion that the office of Overseer as it at present exists should be abolished, and I have suggested, as already indicated, a substitute for these officials.

Whatever differences of opinion there may be on the matter, I trust that the few remarks I have made will lead to a discussion of a useful and practical character.

DISCUSSION.

Rev. R. J. LLOYD (Newcastle-in-Emlyn) wished to say a few words with regard to the very suggestive paper that had been read to them. He represented a Union almost entirely given to out-relief. What Guardians wanted was information, and he thought it very desirable that occasionally visits should be made by the Chairman and Guardians, as Canon Edmondes had suggested. 'The Overseers' question had come home to him in his parish very forcibly. Men had kept money in hand, and it had resulted in their own ruin and great loss to the parish. Overseers left everything to their assistants, and the consequence was great confusion and trouble. It would be well if they could have an official who would take charge of everything, and look after the accounts. (Mr HERBERT LLOYD—Do you suggest a paid official?) A permanent paid official.

Mr HERBERT LLOYD (Pontardawe) said that for years before Parish and District Councils were created the Guardians had the greatest difficulty about this question. Through the greater portion of Glamorganshire Collectors were appointed by the Guardians, and the appointment of Overseer seemed to be an anomaly. He was of little or no use. He did not attend to his duties; he did not look after the Collector, and very often actually signed receipts for money he had not received. If the Collector did not pay up his calls, the Guardians came down on the Overseer, who thereupon pointed out that the Guardians had appointed the Collector. However, the Guardians must have some one upon whom to make the calls, and he (Mr Herbert Lloyd) suggested that the Clerk to the District Council or the Clerk to the Guardians should have all calls by the rating authorities made upon him, and the Guardians or District Council would then know exactly the amount required from each parish. It was now left very much to the Collector. If all calls were made upon the Clerk to the Guardians or the Clerk to the District Council, they could direct that a rate should be made, and if it was signed by the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Clerk to the District Council, that might be accepted as sufficient guarantee that the rate was properly made and in due form. It would entail some additional labour for the Clerks to the Boards or Councils, and it would be a question whether there should not be some extra payment. [A VOICE—No question at all; no doubt about it.] (Laughter.) At present they were putting temptation in the way of a class of men over whom they did not exercise that supervision they ought to. He had tried periodical audits, but it was a tremendous undertaking,

and at last he had let the matter slide, as it was most difficult to get Guardians to give the time to it. It was necessary to have constant supervision, otherwise the Overseers held a lot of money in hand, and perhaps traded with it. (Hear, hear.)

Mr F. T. BIRCHAM said he did not rise at all to discuss the question, for it was not for him to do it. The author of the paper had suggested a very searching reform, but there were one or two questions as to actual fact which he would like him to modify slightly. The first was as to Medical Officers having power to grant relief. They had no power to grant relief at all. The doctor's order was only a medical recommendation that such and such food or medicine was required for that particular patient. It was for the Relieving Officer to decide whether the means of the patient were sufficient to provide that medical necessary or not; and he would be very sorry if any one went away with the idea that they were obliged to carry out the doctor's order, and had no control over his recommendation. The other point was this. Mr Jones suggested that Guardians were the best people to entrust with the power to give relief in urgent cases instead of the Overseer. He thought that the Guardian should be the last person, both for his own sake and that of the district, to have the power of ordering relief. His life would be a burden to him if that power rested with him. It was bad enough now. There was a good deal too much going behind the back of the Board to get individual Guardians to recommend relief. If he had the power of ordering relief, the last vestige of his defence against the ordinary pauper would be destroyed. Now the Guardians could send cases to the Relieving Officer, whose advice was generally carried out—in fact, too much so. In some districts, however, the Relieving Officer was too far away to send the urgent cases to him, and whether in that case the power should be given to the Guardian or not he did not know. Some one must be invested with it, but he did not know what was the right peg to hang the hat upon.

Mr WILLIAMS (Brecon) said the paper was a valuable one from the historical point of view. Mr Hopkin Jones said that the Overseers manipulated the accounts as they pleased, but there was abundant evidence that the Collectors and not the Overseers manipulated the accounts. It was said that the Overseer should be a man capable of valuing property and a good accountant. The ratepayers, as represented in the District Councils, ought to have the appointment of such an official, but he was of opinion that there were quite enough paid officials already, and that it was not advisable to add to their number. The lion's share of the poor rate went to officials, and not to the poor. (No, no.)

Mr CROSS (Cardiff) totally disagreed with the last speaker. The office of Overseer was one of the antiquated offices that ought to be abolished. At present the Collectors were responsible to the Overseers, and there was dual control. There was no mercantile firm who would conduct their business on such lines. Some few years ago

their Board felt that the amount of arrears written off as bad debts was enormous. They asked the Collectors to furnish them with a list, but the answer was, "We're not responsible to the Guardians, we're responsible to the Overseers, and it is not part of our duty to furnish these particulars." The Guardians had to do without them, though he thought that the Collectors eventually offered to produce their books, or something of the kind. Owing to the want of proper control, receipts had been given to ratepayers, and yet the rates had been written off as irrecoverable. If there was a proper officer, not necessarily an inquisitor, he would see the returns, and form his own judgment about things. (Hear, hear.) As a rule, the paid supervisor—call him what they would—should be independent of the Clerk of the Guardians. The more supervision there was the better. At the same time, he thought that it must be patent to all that the Overseers were of absolutely no use whatever. (Hear, hear.)

Mr WILLIAMS (Portskewet) asked the Chairman whether the visits of which he spoke were visits to the pay stations, or whether they were visits to any part of the district haphazard. He got up to say a word or two on behalf of the very much abused Overseers. The whole matter rested with each parish. If the parishioners did their duty, the Overseers would do theirs, and do it well. There would be great difficulty in finding a substitute for the Overseers. The whole drift of the paper was rather towards the question as it presented itself in the towns rather than in the rural districts. In the whole of his large Union they had but one paid Collector, and they never experienced any difficulty whatever in getting in the rates. The Great Western Railway Company were the largest ratepayers, and arrangements had been made with the Company to pay the rates direct to the Treasurer, and so reduce the expenses of the Collector's guarantee. He did not know where those Overseers were who had been in the habit of assessing themselves and their friends at a low figure, and their rivals at a high one. There might be one or two, but he had not met them. In his own neighbourhood they had honest and straightforward men, who did their duty impartially. He maintained that Overseers, as a class, had done their duty well, and it was absolutely necessary that they should have some one in each parish to relieve urgent cases, as it was too frequently physically impossible for the needy to reach the Relieving Officer. He cordially re-echoed Mr Bircham's warning, "Do not place the power of relieving urgent cases in the hands of the Guardians."

Mr SEYMOUR (Llanelly) said he could not agree with all that had been said by the previous speaker. He knew of cases where Overseers had assessed themselves and their friends at a low rate, and their competitors in trade at a high one, and had left others alone who ought to have had a reduction. The difficulty invariably was to get Overseers to put up assessments. They were afraid of becoming unpopular. He would recommend Unions to appoint Collectors, not Overseers.

Mr DAVID (Narberth) said that if the question had the merit of antiquity, it had not the demerit of staleness. He quite agreed with the reader of the paper in his sweeping condemnation of the system, but he hesitated to recommend the appointment of a paid official. Too much of the ratepayers' money now went to the officials, and too little to the poor. Thanks to the late Government, every place had been blessed with a Parish Council—(laughter)—but the cry at their meetings was, "We have no work to do." If the calls were made on the Parish Councils in future, instead of on the Overseers, it would awaken public interest in the question. He would like to touch upon the power of the Overseers to dispense relief to urgent cases. Already the Guardian's life was a burden. Every morning paupers besieged his door asking for relief. Why not entrust the power to the Chairman of the Parish Council if the Overseers were done away with? As a rule he was a responsible person. (Hear, hear, and "No.")

Mr DANIEL EVANS (Glyncorrwg) said that at the present day Overseers were nothing but a sham. (Hear, hear.) The Collector did all the work, and the Overseers did not see a book from year's end to year's end. The Overseer, in his experience, was just as difficult to get at as the Relieving Officer for the relief of urgent cases, and the Guardians were bound, therefore, to grant relief themselves. Overseers were nothing but a farce in years gone by, the rate Collectors robbed parishes of hundreds of pounds owing to the negligence of the Overseers.

Mr R. H. BUCKLEY (Narberth) did not think that the fault lay so much with the Overseers as with the ratepayers themselves. Some twenty years ago he found an Assistant Overseer in his parish who nominated himself Overseer, held all the meetings in the public-house, and always put five shillings worth of beer on the table. (Laughter.) He (Mr Buckley) said that that could not go on any longer, and he compelled the Assistant Overseer to arrange with the Vestry what rate should be levied. They had now got a strictly honest Overseer, and the rates are in a healthy state. If all the ratepayers would take an interest in these matters, there would be no defaulting Overseers. As to the Chairman of the Parish Council being the one to levy the rate, that person might be paying no more than £1 a year in rates, and nine out of eleven Parish Councillors paid no rates at all. (Hear, hear.)

Mr HARRIS (Cardiff) said he was very much interested in the paper, and thoroughly in sympathy with most of the ideas expressed in it. In many places the present system was perfection itself, and the whole of the rates were collected, but unfortunately that was not the case everywhere, and they must consider the system not at its best, but at its worst. There should be some system which, as far as possible, protected the ratepayers against loss. He could not help thinking that it would have been very much better if the Legislature had transferred the duty of collecting the rates when it transferred

the administration of relief, for, since the Overseers had not had to distribute relief, they had ceased to take any interest in their duties. The appointment was an annual one, and most Overseers sought to get through the year of office as easily as possible, and the result was that the work was left to the Assistant Overseer and the Collector. It would be very much better to leave to the Assessment Committee of the Union the whole duty of levying and collecting the rates. It would be necessary, in all probability, in the case that the Committee should be enlarged, and include representatives of other spending authorities. He did not see that that would entail any great increase of expenditure. The present system was rather a wasteful one, seeing that there was one or two officials in each parish, and he felt that in the long run the work would be done more cheaply than it was at present. (Hear, hear.) The whole matter would then be under the supervision of the Assessment Committee, and such officers as they chose to appoint. The risk of loss would be thereby avoided. At present the officers worked under the direction of the Overseers, and if there was a large amount in arrears, all that the Guardians could do was to call the attention of the Overseers to it, and, if the Overseers did not choose to act, the Guardians had no further power.

Mr SHEPPARD (Bedwellty) said that the Guardians had the power to apply to the Local Government Board to appoint Overseers and Assistant Overseers.

The CHAIRMAN invited Mr Hopkin Jones to put his opinions in the form of a resolution.

Mr HOPKIN JONES said that he would be the last man to suggest the appointment of another paid official, but he was obliged to suggest some one as a substitute for the Overseers. The consensus of opinion that day was in favour of the abolition of the office of Overseer. A question might arise as to whom the precept should be served upon. He said that it did not matter in the least whom it was sent to—whether the Chairman, or Parish Council, or any other responsible person. If anything was done in the direction of the abolition of the office of Overseer, the Local Government Board would appoint the best man for the purpose. With regard to payment, there was the order of the Local Government Board already that the Collector should make monthly returns to the Guardians. He (Mr Hopkin Jones) took those returns for what they were worth. (Laughter, and Hear, hear.) In his Union they passed a resolution that the whole of the deposited books should be produced monthly, and it was done for some time; but not with satisfactory results. The new official ought to be independent of the Parish Council, Parish Meeting, or Vestry. The Overseers made the rates without going to anybody, and that gave them immense power. A man of no responsibility at all often held office as Overseer. When a man of that kind had power to make a rate in defiance of all authority, he (Mr Hopkin Jones) said the sooner that system was done away with

the better. (Hear, hear.) The Overseers of rural parishes were the greatest transgressors. He moved—"That in the opinion of this Conference the office of Overseer as it at present exists should be no longer allowed to continue, and that a permanent official or officials should be appointed, whose main duties would be to superintend the collection of rates and to assist the Assessment Committee in the valuation of property." He could fairly say that he could not remember a single instance when the Overseers had put in an appearance—it was always the Collector.

Mr CROSS (Cardiff) seconded the resolution.

Mr HARRIS (Cardiff) moved the following amendment after "allowed to continue,"—"And that the duties should be transferred to the Assessment Committee of the Union, who should be empowered to appoint and pay officers for assessing and collecting the rates." He thought that the proposed change would lead to greater economy.

Mr HAYNES (Swansea) seconded the amendment.

Mr HOPKIN JONES said he could not accept the amendment, as his object was that an official should be appointed by some outside authority so that he would be quite an independent man, such as the Surveyor of Taxes or the Excise Officers. They were not come-at-able like a local man, and would be far more likely to do their duty properly than a man appointed by a local body. They all knew the wire-pulling on such occasions.

Mr WILLIAMS (Brecon) objected to the ratepayers being saddled with the expense of a fresh set of officials.

Mr BEVAN (Cardiff) said Mr Hopkin Jones in the paper himself advocated that "a paid Overseer or Overseers should be appointed by the Guardians of every Union, who should be a man capable of assisting the Assessment Committee in the valuation of property, and also be a good accountant." (Laughter, and Hear, hear.)

Mr H. P. CHARLES (Neath) said that he appeared occasionally on behalf of Assessment Committees. They were a judicial body, and they were not, in his opinion, the proper persons to entrust with the duties, as there was often a great deal of party feeling about such matters. The body who had to say whether a rate was right ought not to have anything to do with making the assessment.

Rev. W. H. WILLIAMS said the whole intention of the Act of 1894 was to revivify local interest in local affairs, and the amendment would do the very opposite.

On a show of hands the amendment was lost, eight voting for it and fifteen voting against it.

Mr WILLIAMS (Brecon) moved, and the Rev. W. H. WILLIAMS seconded, that the office of Overseer be continued in the future as in the past.

Mr EDWARD POWELL (Neath, Hon. Sec.) said that the only ground that the mover and seconder of the amendment had given was that the creation of a new official would be an additional source of expense.

He quite agreed with Mr Harris that there would be very little extra expense. The mover and seconder had fallen into the fallacy that the Overseers were not paid. They charged for going to pay money to the Treasurer and for attending at various places, and the whole of the charges were fictitious, because the Collector did all the work. It was an indirect way of getting remuneration. The Overseer also had the duty of preparing the lists of voters—as a matter of fact he did not prepare a list. He simply levied a contribution on the services of the Collectors, who did the work, while the Overseers were most extravagantly paid for it. Instead of increasing the expenditure the reform would have the effect of lessening the expenditure, and that, in rural districts, instead of the expense falling directly on a small parish, it would be distributed over a larger area. (Hear, hear.)

Mr PRATT (Pontypridd) supported the amendment. Before the present machinery was removed they ought to find better.

Upon a show of hands, eighteen voted for the resolution and ten for the amendment. The amendment was therefore lost.

Miss MASON wished to explain that her reference to the necessity for appointing a certified Boarding-out Committee of ladies did not relate only to where boarding out was being started as a new thing, but that where boarding out was already in operation such a Committee should be appointed. She would be very glad to show any Guardian all the necessary forms.

Mrs PATON (Llanelly) thought it was her duty to thank Miss Mason most heartily for her valuable suggestion as to the ladies' committee.

Mr F. T. BIRCHAM said that owing to the early period of the year at which the Conference was held he had not got the returns up to Lady Day last. If any one doubted the necessity for Conferences of that kind, he thought that those doubts would vanish when they considered the enormous amount of money over which the authorities represented there that day had control. Omitting the odd figures, the amount of rates collected under the head of poor rates in South Wales alone was £851,000, and of that sum £368,000 went in indoor and outdoor relief of the poor, the maintenance of workhouses, salaries, and that kind of thing. In North Wales, out of £288,000 collected under the same head, £150,000 went to the relief of the poor. During the year lately ended, South Wales spent no less than £190,000 in outdoor relief alone, and £53,000 in indoor relief; North Wales spent £17,000 in indoor relief, and £93,000 in outdoor relief. The paupers in his district numbered (indoor) 70,828, and (outdoor) 283,757. If any one said he did not care about what any one else was doing, he thought that he had no right to say so; but he noticed with regret the absence of some Unions that ought to be represented at the Conference, whilst representatives were present from many Unions much farther off. He hoped, having regard to the small sum it cost to send delegates, and the importance of the work done, that next year there would be at Langland Bay

representatives from a very much larger number of Unions. (Hear, hear.) As a broad rule, he called a Union a well-managed Union when it spent less on pauperism than on other purposes, such as education, roads, bridges, and police. Those Unions which spent more on pauperism than on other purposes were in all cases, he had noticed, the worst administered. Wherever he found strict investigation in regard to the outdoor relief he was satisfied. They had got to spend the money on roads, bridges, police, and what not, and if they chose to be extravagant in pauperism it was their own fault. It was by no means the poorest Unions which spent most in pauperism. Strict investigation on the part of the Guardians led to better relief for the deserving poor and less for the undeserving, which was what he liked to see. (Hear, hear.) He hoped that next year some one would read a paper as to the way in which the relief given was spent. Guardians would be sometimes surprised to see what was done with the half-crown or five shillings. They might give it to an old man or old woman; but it, in some cases, formed the mainstay of a whole family who were, perhaps, absolutely parasites living on the aged relative, whose rent was paid by the Guardians.

The CHAIRMAN moved, and Mr BUCKLEY seconded, a vote of thanks to the readers of the papers. This was carried.

Father DEGAN (Pontypool) moved, and Mr LLEWELLYN HOWELL (Neath) seconded, a vote of thanks to Mr Herbert Lloyd, the Chairman of the Executive Committee. Carried.

Mr LLOYD (Newcastle-in-Emlyn) proposed a vote of thanks to the Honorary Secretary. Mr HERBERT (Llandilo) seconded the proposition. Carried.

Mr E. POWELL (Hon. Sec.) responding, said that whatever he had done was amply rewarded by that most successful gathering. (Cheers.)

Mr BEVAN (Cardiff) proposed a vote of thanks to the Rev. Canon Edmondes for his most able chairmanship.

Mr PRATT and Mr CROSS supported the proposition, which was carried with acclamation.

The CHAIRMAN said that in reply to Mr Williams' question during the discussion, he might say that he and other Guardians visited several of the pay stations, and saw all the people who were able to get there. He could quite see that surprise visits would be an advantage, but they would not be practicable over the whole of the Union. The Executive might congratulate themselves on having had a most successful Conference.

The proceedings then terminated.

Northern District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

TWENTY - FIFTH ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE
FOR THE FOUR NORTHERN COUNTIES, NORTH-
UMBERLAND, CUMBERLAND, WESTMORLAND, AND
DURHAM, HELD AT THE SHAWS HOTEL, GILSLAND,
ON TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY, 13TH AND 14TH
JULY 1897.

President—JAMES CROPPER, Esq., Ellergreen, Kendal,
Chairman of the County Council for Westmorland.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference.

CUMBERLAND.

BOOTLE—

Mr W. J. Yarr.
Mr W. Bradley.

CARLISLE—

Rev. Canon Waterton (Chairman).
Mrs Chalker.
Mrs Hetherington.
Miss Johnston.
Mr R. Thomlinson.
Mr H. B. Lonsdale (Clerk).
Mr W. Scott (Master).

COCKERMOUTH—

Mr T. Carey.
Mrs Dodgson.
Miss King.
Mr W. Laird.
Mr J. Murray.

WHITEHAVEN—

Rev. A. F. Curwen (Chairman).
Mr J. S. Ainsworth.
Rev. E. H. Sugden.

WIGTON—

Rev. Father Bourke.
Rev. H. Whitmore.

DURHAM.

BISHOP AUCKLAND—

Mr J. Rogerson (Chairman).
Mr J. Gains.
Mr H. Jemison.
Mr S. Adams (Clerk).

CHESTER-LE-STREET—

Mr R. Bolam.
Mr W. Hawkins.
Mr T. Richardson.
Mr R. Dickinson (Clerk).

GATESHEAD—

Mr F. J. Finn.
Col. A. Palmer.
Mrs Spence Watson.
Mr G. Craighill (Clerk).

LANCHESTER—

Mr R. Kay.
Mr E. Sloane.
Mr W. H. Ritson (Clerk).

SEDGEFIELD—

Mr C. Davis.
Mr J. Lamb.

Unions Represented at the Congress—*Continued.*

SOUTH SHIELDS—

Mr R. Archbold (Chairman).
 Mr R. Allison.
 Ald. Mabane, J.P.
 Mr J. Martin.
 Mrs Stansfield.
 Mr T. Tennent.
 Mr J. W. Coulson (Clerk).

SUNDERLAND—

Mr T. Armstrong.
 Dr Bowmaker.
 Mr W. Brantingham.
 Mrs C. T. Chambers.
 Mr J. J. Gilbertson.
 Rev. F. E. Marsh.
 Mr S. S. Hodgson (Clerk).

NORTHUMBERLAND.

ALNWICK—

Mr C. B. P. Bosanquet (Chairman).

CASTLE WARD—

Rev. Canon Walker.

HEXHAM—

Mr J. M. Ridley, J.P.

NEWCASTLE—

Mr J. H. Rodgers (Vice-Chairman).
 Mr G. G. Archibald.
 Mrs Bentham.
 Miss Pease.
 Mr J. W. Gibson (Clerk).

TYNEMOUTH—

Ald. Spence (Chairman).
 Mr J. G. Brown.
 Dr Brumell.
 Mr Eskdaile.
 Mrs Fraser.
 Mr Murray.
 Mrs Seymour.
 Mrs Spence.
 Mr J. G. Walker.
 Mr S. Scott (Clerk).

WESTMORLAND.

EAST WARD—

Rev. J. Brunskill.

KENDAL—

Mr J. Cropper, J.P. (Chairman).
 Hon. Mrs C. Cropper.

VISITORS.

Mr C. A. Dawson, Local Govern-
 ment Inspector.
 Mr J. R. Mozley, Inspector of Poor
 Law Schools.

Mr and Mrs Bernard Bosanquet,
 Caterham, Surrey.
 Miss Bosanquet, Alnwick.
 Mr E. J. J. Browell, J.P. (Chairman,
 R.D.C.), South Shields.
 Miss H. Browne, Newcastle.
 Dr Campbell, Garlands Asylum,
 Carlisle.

Miss Campbell.
 Mr J. R. Carr-Ellison, Alnwick.
 Mr C. E. Carr, Alnwick.
 Miss Horn, Hambledon, Hants.
 Sister Lucy, Carlisle.
 Mr J. Moulding (Clerk), Toxteth
 Park Union.
 Mr H. V. Walker (Assistant Clerk),
 Middlesborough.
 Dr Keenan, Guardian, Middles-
 borough.
 Mr McNulty, Guardian, Middles-
 borough.

The following Unions were not represented at the Conference :—

CUMBERLAND.—Alston with Garrigill, Brampton, Longtown, Penrith.

DURHAM.—Darlington, Durham, Easington, Hartlepool, Houghton-le-Spring, Stockton, Teesdale, Weardale.

NORTHUMBERLAND.—Belford, Bellingham, Berwick-on-Tweed, Glendale, Haltwhistle, Morpeth, Rothbury.

WESTMORLAND.—West Ward.

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TUESDAY, 13TH JULY 1897.

Mr CHARLES B. P. BOSANQUET (Hon. Sec.) stated that amongst those who had been prevented from attending the meeting were the Rt. Hon. John Lloyd Wharton and Mr Jenner Fust. Dr Dodd, who was to have made a short statement as to the present arrangement of nursing in the Newcastle Workhouse, had written to him stating that the scheme was not yet in full working order, but he hoped that next year he would be able to make his statement. He had received several letters during the past year from Mr W. Chance, the active Hon. Secretary of the Central Conference, as to the reporting of Conferences; also in regard to the equal representation at the Central Conference of all Boards of Guardians in England and Wales, irrespective of their distance from London; and further, in respect of a proposal that a Children's Department of the Local Government Board should be created. He thought that those present would be decidedly in favour of the proposal; and would be of opinion that it was clearly best that the children should remain under the care of the Guardians.

The Committee of the Conference had met in Newcastle on 6th April. He had submitted a balance-sheet and vouchers. Receipts had been £7. 8s., expenditure £6. 12s. This, with a previous balance, made a balance to the good of £3. 6s. 9d. The Committee recommended that the Conference join the Central Committee to the extent of £4. 4s. in their guarantee of £30 to Messrs King &

Son in connection with reporting and printing the Conference Reports—£4. 4s. being the amount hitherto paid by the Northern Conference to its shorthand writer. The instructions of the Committee had been carried out as to Subjects and Readers.

Private business would be taken as usual the first thing on the second day.

The PRESIDENT said he was very glad to see so many old faces and some new ones, and to think that they were all those of people who intended to place before them opinions based upon practical acquaintance with the administration of the Poor Law. He supposed it would be hardly possible for any one to make a speech this year without being, to use Sir William Harcourt's phrase, more or less "jubilious." In the sixty years of the Queen's reign the New Poor Law had attained to its present position. Though proposed in 1834, it was not until some years after Her Majesty ascended the throne that it was in full operation. There were reactionaries at that time who said the New Poor Law was a great mistake, and not nearly equal to the old Poor Law. If any one knew what the old Poor Law meant to the poor, what it meant to the ratepayers, and the hatred it engendered between rich and poor, they would think that the right administration of the Poor Law had not been among the least of the benefits of the Queen's reign. While they often had to make complaints about points of detail, they would never cease to wonder how it was that the country got so much good, almost inspired, legislation in the early days of the Victorian era. We required nowadays a great deal of influence and a great deal of time to effect any changes in such a settled machine as the Poor Law. Their kindred Conferences and the Central Poor Law Conference should bring pressure to bear on the improvement of the Poor Law. He always looked upon it that they were really governed by the Inspectors, for they were the persons upon whom the Government relied. Amongst the improvements effected in recent years one of the chief was, he thought, the introduction of women as Guardians. There were so many women and girls in the Workhouses that it was highly desirable that women should take part in Poor Law work.

INDUSTRIAL TRAINING OF WORKHOUSE GIRLS AND THEIR SUPERVISION AFTER THEY LEAVE THE WORKHOUSE.

BY MRS CHALKER,

Guardian of the Poor, Carlisle.

IN the interesting paper read at the Gilsland Conference last year by Mr Beattie, Chairman of the Newcastle Board of Guardians, I noted a statement of what the aim of Guardians should be in dealing with the children under their care — “to give the children such an education, combined with judicious training, as will enable them to maintain themselves, and lift them out of the ranks of pauperism.” I think that all will agree that this statement puts in few words what should be hoped for as the result of the care provided and the money expended on their behalf.

In using the word “Education,” I would include in it far more than is frequently implied by the word. Education is often taken to mean solely what is taught in school, but it should include the bringing out and developing a child’s faculties and moral nature. This teaching, to be effective, must be carried on, not only in school hours, but through influences brought to bear on every detail of the child’s life.

Then as to “Training.” This should be not only technical instruction, but such individual dealing with each child as really to prepare and fit them for entering on the battle of life.

I think we all need to remember that many if not the majority of the children that come into a workhouse have not only to learn but to unlearn. The tendencies they inherit have to be counteracted. It is sad to realise how difficult it is to eradicate the impressions on character left, even in quite young children, by the bad influences of drunken and careless parents

and low bad surroundings. It seems, therefore, that Guardians should not be satisfied with any system which does not aim at raising the whole character, and so fitting the children to become in the future respectable, useful members of society, with no fear of drifting down again to the level of the pauper class.

On the subject of the amount of training necessary before girls are sent out from the Workhouse into service, opinion has much changed. Twenty years and more ago, when I first became interested in the subject, no one seemed to have any idea but one as to the disposal of girls—at least this was the case in the smaller Unions; though even at that time the large London and other town Unions had their District Schools. As soon as a girl reached the age of thirteen or fourteen she was placed out in service with mistresses applying to the Board for them, without any special teaching or training, and a very sad experience it was to the majority of girls. Of late years attention has been much drawn to the subject, and very much more interest has been taken in the disposal of the children, so that, at the present time, how best to provide for the employment of girls after school age, and in what way most completely to fit them for such employment, is a problem much discussed and being dealt with in various ways.

There is the old plan of keeping girls in the Workhouse, employing them in such household work as is needed in the institution itself, and then placing them in service direct from the Workhouse. This plan has many drawbacks.

Mr Mozley, Local Government Inspector, in one of his Reports, in writing of this system, says, “One of its weaknesses is no doubt the excess of a kind of house work which, in its proper measure, is useful and necessary, the scrubbing of floors, and an excessive amount of mending;” and again, “There is plenty of work which, when confined within reasonable limits, is

educational, but which beyond these limits is a weariness to the flesh, and while adding nothing to a child's knowledge, inevitably gives a strong distaste to the process of learning."

Sometimes opinions are expressed by Guardians that this amount of routine work provides all that a girl needs to fit her for domestic service, but I will venture to quote the remark of one of the Local Government Board Inspectors—"The knowledge which men have of the industrial work of girls is abstract and remote, whereas women know how each point tells in that kind of situation which a girl will have when she goes out into the world."

The household work of an institution is of necessity altogether different to that of a family. The cooking, the washing, the serving of meals are totally different to what a girl would have to deal with when she leaves the Workhouse. Food cooked in large quantities by steam, washing done by mechanical appliances, meals measured out and served on plates—none of this prepares girls for the ways of an ordinary household, or tends to make them handy and neat-fingered.

Then the work of an institution is such an invariable routine, that when girls cease to be part of the machine which brings round the same duties day by day, they often appear helpless, and are wrongly often styled "stupid," when their apparent stupidity comes from never having been accustomed to exercise their faculties so as to act spontaneously or in any way to learn to become generally useful.

I have talked over this question with experienced matrons of Workhouses, and many others interested in the welfare of Workhouse girls, and from all I have heard the same opinion—that the training under this system is limited in scope and very incomplete. One matron who had the advantage of an industrial trainer to assist her, said to me, "After all it is but little we can teach—scrubbing, cleaning, making beds, mending

clothes, of which the girls get very weary ; but all the real detail of household work, all that goes to make an efficient servant, we have no means of giving that instruction, and consequently when the girls leave us they do not get situations such as we should like to see them in."

To quote from the Report of one of the Local Government Board Inspectors on the subject of this placing out of girls from the Workhouse, " Domestic service seems to be an inexhaustible resource, but whether the girls are sent to proper persons is a different question." Mr Hagger, Clerk to the Liverpool Board of Guardians, in a paper read last year at the North-Western Poor Law Conference, said : " No doubt domestic service offers practically unlimited openings for female labour, but so far as my experience goes there are comparatively few satisfactory openings for girls of fourteen or fifteen years of age. The household into which such a girl is ordinarily taken is one in which no other servant is kept, and the child in many cases becomes a mere drudge. She is expected to be first astir in the morning, and she is occupied throughout the day in the discharge of the least attractive household duties, often under the direction of an inconsiderate mistress." As an illustration, I will mention a case I was told of lately by a Poor Law official. A girl in service was brought by her mistress to be reprimanded for idleness and neglect of duty. It was found on inquiry, that the previous day the young girl had been up very early and kept employed all day, and when the mistress and her family went out to spend the evening she was left with a task of mending and washing. Returning at 11 P.M., the mistress found the girl fallen fast asleep over her work, only half her task done—so she was accused of neglect of duty, and after being kept up and at work for nearly seventeen hours was called " idle."

My own experience is of course limited, but even

from that I could divide into two classes the places whose mistresses were willing to take a girl direct from the Workhouse,—places where only very low wages were given and where a drudge was wanted to do the roughest and dirtiest work ; or places avoided by other servant girls owing to defects of temper in the mistress or some bad household management. In such situations a girl does not meet with the care and consideration likely to induce her to take pains to improve, or to lead her to look on service as a desirable and honourable calling. To give an example: A mistress who had taken a girl from the Workhouse into her service summed up what she considered her duty to her young servant in these words, “ And I do not see what more I can do for her, for I fratch her now from morning to night.” No wonder the girl lost heart and was only saved from running away by the promise that if she would patiently stay out her term she should have some real training and a better situation be found for her later on.

There is also this serious objection, that this system does not provide girls with any place to be “ home ” to them where they can go between their places or for holidays except the Workhouse itself, so they must either continue in this dependent class or be in danger of drifting into very unsatisfactory surroundings by going into some chance lodging.

Then in regard to moral training. Even when the children are kept in a separate building to the adults they are continually being brought into association with the lowest class of pauper children, the “ ins and outs.” It becomes extremely difficult under these conditions to instil into them that feeling of self-respect and independence which, properly developed, does so much to safeguard a child from drifting downwards. The very best of matrons cannot possibly deal individually with, and study the character and disposition of each child, the other duties of her position do not

allow it, and yet to prepare a child for her work in life, this is as much needed as the technical instruction in household work.

Many Boards of Guardians now place their girls in Training Homes so that they may have a time of special training between their school time and going into service. This should ensure the personal individual training of character and the development of each girl's capabilities. Every one who has had much experience of such girls knows how much this individual treatment is needed, what necessity there is that truthfulness, strict honesty, and trustworthiness should be firmly but kindly inculcated.

It is desirable that Training Homes should be small : that is to say, limited to such a number of girls as can be treated as members of a household. The appliances should be such as are met with in ordinary family life. In such Homes, with an average number of from ten to fourteen girls, there are usually at least two resident teachers,—the lady superintendent or matron, with whom rests the general management of the girls ; and an under matron, to assist specially in the practical teaching of household work.

The change to different surroundings and the personal interest taken in each girl brings out the girl's character and capabilities. They receive special training for whichever department of domestic service they show the greatest aptitude, though each girl is taught the whole round of household work, being in turn kitchen, laundry, house and parlour maid. They learn to cook at an ordinary kitchen range, to bake bread in an ordinary oven, to wash with the appliances used in small private families. They are taught not only to wash, but to iron clothes properly. Needle-work, the making as well as the mending of clothes, is carefully taught.

They are made responsible for the care of their own clothing, for keeping all in good order, neatly

mended, tidily put away. This may seem an insignificant detail; but for girls from Workhouses, unused to the charge or care of their things, it is an essential part of training in habits of neatness and order. Good outfits given to girls on leaving the Workhouse without this previous training, are frequently spoiled and wasted through ignorance of how to keep and take care of them.

In these Homes the girls have to use and handle all the ordinary furniture and plenishing of a dwelling-house, and so in time cease to be clumsy and destructive, though the replacing the many articles broken in the process becomes a serious tax on the funds. An excellent matron of much experience in training girls, and who received them from the Workhouse at the age they would otherwise have been sent to service, describing their general unfitness for a situation without extra training, said: "They certainly can scrub a floor, but even that they do in an imperfect manner, without method or real cleanliness; they are not fit to be trusted in a bedroom, for they are ignorant of the use of the different articles of furniture, they have no idea how to make a bed nicely, or how to clean and tidily arrange the crockery. In the kitchen, on first coming, they are practically useless, and cannot be left to do the simplest thing without direction, and invariably make themselves and their clothes extremely dirty over any little job of work they do." The condition was summed up in these words, "They would not be able to keep a situation, for no mistress would pay wages to a girl who required such continual watching and patient teaching before being of the slightest use."

In a Training Home they are constantly under the influence of the lady in charge, and also of those Members of the Committee who take an interest in each individual girl and get to know them well.

The result aimed at is the raising the whole moral tone and the implanting a sense of personal respon-

sibility, which, combined with habits of neatness and cleanliness, enables the girls to be placed out in carefully selected places of service.

To quote again from Mr Hagger's paper, "The training girls get in such Homes is useful in itself, but the principal advantage to them will be found in the fact that, through the interest of the managers of the Homes, there is a better chance of the girls obtaining a good start than if they had been kept in the Workhouse Schools." Without endorsing the opinion that it is the principal advantage, it is certainly a great help, as is also the being placed out without its being known that the girl had ever been in a Workhouse.

We speak of caste in connection with India as if it were limited to that Empire, but the caste spirit is very strong in some classes in England, and many a poor girl has had to suffer bitter humiliation through the scornful treatment she received when it became known that she had been a "Workhouse girl." The disadvantage to them of this being known has deterred many associates of the Girls' Friendly Society from making reports to Boards of Guardians about girls they have cared for and watched over. An associate who had visited and befriended girls belonging to one Union for sixteen years was never once asked to give an account of their condition, and owing to her fear of damaging the position the girls had risen into, or causing them to be in any way associated with pauperism, she volunteered no report till she discovered that the Board of Guardians were quite ignorant of what had been done with the help of the Girls' Friendly Society to lift the girls out of the pauper class, and so prevent them coming to be again a charge upon the rates.

For holidays and between situations the Training Home is home with a small $\frac{1}{2}$, the girls coming back from time to time, and when away corresponding with their special friend, and looking to her for advice and

sympathy. It has been truly said that there are many now doing well in service who, humanly speaking, have been saved from ruin by having the Homes to turn to.

There are 211 small certified Homes in England and Wales, and others besides not certified, but "approved" by the Local Government Board. The payments made by Guardians vary from 3s. to 7s. a week. The advantages of such Homes are thoroughly recognised by the Local Government Board. More of these small Homes are needed, but funds are the difficulty. If Boards of Guardians would realise that payment, and liberal payment, for a time of thorough training is really a good investment for the future, this difficulty would be lessened. The Master of a large Workhouse, speaking of a resolution passed by his Board of Guardians, that no girl should be placed in service direct from the Workhouse, but have a time of training apart from it, said, "It is the very best thing for the girls, and it is the very best thing for the ratepayers."

There are Training Homes specially for laundry work at Alnwick, Settle, and Liverpool.

Then for girls who are fairly intelligent, but in some way unsuitable for domestic service, the Stay Factory at Market Harborough offers great advantages, both of care and supervision, for homeless girls. When a girl first goes to the factory the proprietors board her with a respectable family, and pay her expenses instead of giving her wages, until she is able to earn enough to keep herself. This depends on how soon the girl can be put to "piece work," but if she takes pains to get on, she soon can earn from 10s. 6d. to 12s. a week. An older girl, quite able to take the more skilled branches of the work, would get up to 18s. to £1 a week. Some Guardians have taken advantage of the Act of 1889 to place their girls sent to this work under the absolute control of the sister of the owner of the factory.

In the Report of the Poor Law Schools Committee one recommendation, made for the teaching of feeble-minded children, was "that they be placed in small voluntary Homes specially suited for their care and maintenance." There are but few Homes for this class of children, and it is therefore difficult to get a child admitted. I hear that two more have lately been opened, one at Morpeth and one at Wakefield, and at the present time there are vacancies.

The large District Schools, judging from the Swinton Schools in Lancashire, are amply provided with every appliance to enable girls to be really taught in preparation for service. The cooking for the inmates is done in one kitchen on institution lines, but the girls learn their work in another kitchen where there is a kitchen-range as in a private house, and are under the direction of an experienced cook, who prepares the meals for the large staff of officials. The girls are also sent to attend the Technical Instruction Cookery Classes. So in laundry work, in one laundry the washing for the inmates is done mostly by mechanical appliances, in another the girls learn to wash, iron, and get up linen in a proper fashion. They are taught to make as well as to mend their clothes. Some are taught to use a sewing machine, others learn stocking knitting by machinery; this being good employment, in cases where the Committee consider the mother respectable and the home life desirable, enables girls to stay with their mother and help support her instead of going into service. The bright looks of the children struck me very much, but I felt that under such a head as Mr Birkby, the Superintendent, the system was seen at its very best. But admirable as the management and discipline appeared to be, there cannot be in these large institutions the individual treatment of the children, nor can they be trained to familiarity with the ordinary conditions of home life.

No legal obligation seems to be imposed on

Guardians to care for a child after attaining the age of sixteen. Under secs. 4 and 5 of the Act of 1851 the Relieving Officer is required to visit and report upon a child sent to service at least twice a year till it attains the age of sixteen, but not after it has left its first situation. Under sec. 53 of the Act of 1876 this is modified, and the Guardians of any Union or Parish may appoint and pay any officer or other competent person to visit and report upon the condition, treatment, and conduct of any poor child under the age of sixteen who shall have gone out to service from the Workhouse of such Union or Parish.

Mr Chance, in a paper read at the Poor Law Conference held last year at Nottingham, said, "While it is undoubtedly important that the requirements of the Act of 1851 should be complied with, I think we shall all agree that the Relieving Officer is not the best person to visit the child, and that it is much better for the Guardians to utilise the power given them by the Act of 1876 and to employ volunteers." The following remarks on the subject I take from the Report of one of the Local Government Board Inspectors: "It is a matter of regret that Guardians do not always provide that girls when sent out to service are able to refer to some lady for advice and help. Whether such a lady should officially report to the Guardians or merely act as a private friend to the girl is a question of minor importance, but feminine help for a girl entering upon the world is not by any means a matter of minor importance."

The legal obligation on Guardians to care for a child ceases at the age of sixteen, and sooner should she for any reason leave her first situation before that age is attained. But the *need* of such care and supervision does not cease at that age—far from it; the years that follow are some of the most critical in a girl's life, and kind and wise guidance is very important. Also the fact that a girl has left, or been dismissed from her first

situation, does not certainly invest her with the experience and knowledge of how to care for and provide for herself in the future. So, though the legal obligation ceases, some after care needs to be provided. And here the value of voluntary organisations becomes apparent, for there is no limit of age or circumstance to prevent the continuance of watchful care from those who have undertaken to supervise and befriend them.

The two most important organisations for dealing with the after care of girls are the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, known by its initials M.A.B.Y.S., and the Girls' Friendly Society, G.F.S.

To the Metropolitan Association the Guardians of the London Unions have delegated the work of inspection and caring for the girls placed in service. This Association limits its work to the Metropolitan area, but it undertakes to look after and care for young servant girls from the provinces when sent to service in London, as the G.F.S. undertakes to mother and care for girls from London sent to service in the country.

The Girls' Friendly Society is the largest society of its kind, combining women and girls of all classes and all ages. Its machinery for the care of girls, and providing friends for them in moving from place to place, is quite unequalled by any other. Its organisation is not limited to Great Britain, but extends to Canada, the United States, Australia—in fact, to all English-speaking countries.

In England alone there are 16,750 associates—that is to say, ladies pledged to take some real active part in befriending the 150,055 members and the 47,210 candidates for membership in the Society. The numbers are taken from last year's Report.

There is a special department for the care of Workhouse girls, and last year the girls in 450 out of 649 Unions were visited and befriended by associates of the Society.

The number of Boards of Guardians availing themselves of the assistance of the G.F.S. is steadily increasing. Several important Boards have taken steps to authorise, and so secure this valuable supervision. I believe the Newcastle and Tynemouth Boards, the Salford Board, and others, have given the entire visiting of girls in service into the charge of the G.F.S. without the addition of the Relieving Officer. At Liverpool, Mr Hagger reports: "We have for the last forty years entrusted the visitation of our girls to a special officer appointed for this duty. We further avail ourselves of the assistance of the G.F.S., and of the Society having similar aims which deals specially with Roman Catholic girls. From the Swinton Schools, which represent not only the Township of Manchester, but other Unions as well, all the girls placed out in service are given into the care of the G.F.S., and Mr Birkby, the Superintendent, informed me the result was very satisfactory. He added, 'I tell the girls, if you are in any trouble, or find any difficulty, go at once to your associate, and you will be sure of advice and help.'"

The G.F.S. aims at providing for girls—

(1.) A friend they can trust and to whom they know they can appeal. For this reason the children are visited in their young school-days, so that when the time comes for them to be placed out they may naturally turn to the associate for sympathy, help, and guidance. This tie becomes much stronger in the case of girls sent to a Training Home, for there they are brought into closer contact with the Society.

(2.) Care and sympathy wherever the girl may be sent. This is provided for by the girl's home associate or friend writing to another associate living near where the girl is to be placed, and asking her to befriend her during her stay. This is called "commendation."

(3.) The earnest endeavour of the G.F.S. being to raise the girls completely out of the pauper class, return to the Workhouse between places or for any preventable cause is provided against as far as possible, great use being made of Lodges and Homes where girls can be received for holidays or between places. The Board of one Union in the North of England subscribes, I am told, a sum of £10 to the G.F.S., on account of the expense incurred in thus providing for their girls.

(4.) The careful selection of suitable places of service. There is need of more general recognition of the fact that without some safeguard young girls are liable to incur great moral risks. The G.F.S. has a special Registry Department to assist in meeting this difficulty.

Correspondence between girls and their home associates when out of reach of visits, has a great influence for good and keeps up the tie of friendship. Touching proofs are continually given of the trust and confidence in their friend, by the many subjects on which advice is asked and gratefully received. Choice of place of service, how to spend their money, how to place their savings, how to act when any little difficulty arises, and—what is very valuable—seeking sympathy and advice when the inevitable young man appears on the scene.

That the care is far-reaching and exists not only in theory but in practice is the experience of all who take an active interest in the work. To give an instance: A Workhouse girl out in service was urged by relations settled in America to go out and join them; the girl knew very little of them, but being an orphan, the prospect of a home made her anxious to go. Her associate was more than doubtful of the wisdom of the step, so applied to the Central Authority of the G.F.S. in the United States, and obtained the name and address of an associate living near the place to which the girl was bound. When she reached her

destination this lady went to see her, and told her to look on her now as her friend who would always be willing to help her. The relations were unsatisfactory, and the girl had to leave them; but for the G.F.S. she would then have been stranded friendless in a strange land. The associate took her into her own house till suitable employment was found for her, and watched over and cared for her till she was well and happily married. In Canada, Australia, and the Cape Colony, girls commended by the same associate have been well cared for.

The certainty that girls at a distance from their home associate will be befriended in time of sickness is very valuable, and saves many a girl from returning to the Workhouse. Grants are made from the Sick Fund to meet the expense of illness, and admission to Homes of Rest or Convalescent Homes takes them over till able to return to work.

There is one great hindrance in the way of efficient after care which is continually causing difficulty, the interference and bad influence of unworthy relations. When a girl becomes of an age to be wage-earning, attempts are frequently made to tempt her back into the position and surroundings from which she has been raised, for the sake of the money she may bring in. The Poor Law Act of 1889 provides some protection for deserted girls up to the age of eighteen—and it would be well for the age to be raised to twenty-one—but there is great need of similar protection for orphans.

Besides the two large organisations, there are in some towns local societies for befriending young servants—one, for instance, at Bolton, which aims at securing extra training as well as supervision for the girls, but is so restricted in area and support that the work is carried on under many disadvantages. There are other Societies at Bristol, Nottingham, and Lincoln, but at all these centres the G.F.S. is also made use of.

One objection that has been raised to the G.F.S. is that it is an organisation specially in connection with the Church of England, and this is true so far as concerns associates, but membership in the G.F.S. is entirely undenominational. Girls of every type of religious opinion belong to it, and benefit by its Homes, its Lodges, Sick Fund, &c. By its constitution the G.F.S. is bound not to be a proselytising society. In the Instruction for Candidates on the Rules, put in the form of question and answer, it is asked: "What is the rule about the religion of those who join the G.F.S.?" Answer: "Members may be Church girls, Roman Catholics, or Dissenters." "Why is this the rule about members?" Answer: "Because all, whether Church women or not, should help each other, and strive after goodness and purity."

The Society in dealing with Workhouse girls is bound to act in accordance with the Creed Register and the religious orders of the Local Government Board; its organisation is sufficiently elastic to meet all legal requirements. It certainly is a much greater advantage for these girls to belong to a society comprising, as the G.F.S. does, women and girls of every rank and position, than to have some new organisation started on their behalf which would keep them marked as a class apart.

There are some Roman Catholic Societies which provide supervision for girls, the Society of St Vincent de Paul and the "Catholic Children's Aid Society"; there is a Home specially to provide temporary lodgings and to find suitable places for girls who have been in the Swinton Schools, and doubtless there are others, but I cannot learn of any organisation available all over the country.

Mrs Townsend, the Foundress of the G.F.S., thankfully records, that the work of this department has already been recognised in influential quarters as a "devoted and far-reaching motherhood of the daughters

of the State." It is to be hoped that before long some practical way may be found by which this widespread organisation may be made even more useful and inclusive than it has been in the past.

DISCUSSION.

The PRESIDENT said that for over thirty years he had had to do with a home established for orphan girls of the county of Westmorland. They did not by any means fill it, not because of any want of satisfaction with the home, but because girls were so very much more wanted at the present day than they used to be. Almost every class of people were willing to take girls as little servants, or in some other way to help them.

Mr BOSANQUET (Alnwick) said it would be well to know the extent of the powers of the Guardians in contributing towards the support of the girls in training homes.

Mr WHITMORE (Wigton) wished for a little more detail as to the cost of the children in the homes.

Mr DAWSON (Local Government Board Inspector) said that in cases where homes were certified by the Local Government Board, there was always a maximum payment fixed which Guardians could pay, but they were not bound to go to that amount. In cases where the homes were approved by the Local Government Board, but not certified, the Guardians had to obtain the sanction of the Board to pay such annual sum as might be agreed on for each child.

Mr RODGERS (Newcastle) said that a few years ago he had the pleasure of being one of a deputation to visit the homes at Pontefract. A more charming result than had been there arrived at could not be imagined. It was to all intents and purposes a private home. One section of it was occupied by Miss Leatham, the other by Miss Dent, the rest by the servants. There were eight little servant girls altogether, ex-workhouse girls, four of them from the Newcastle Union. They paid four shillings and sixpence per week for their maintenance. Week by week the girls took their turn in the house-work—for a week or a fortnight they were perhaps in the bedrooms, then in the kitchen, and afterwards waiting at table. Altogether it was a unique home, and he would recommend Guardians to visit it.

Mr MURRAY (Cockermouth) suggested that the girls need not necessarily be limited to instruction in housework. Why should not they be apprenticed to the millinery and dressmaking business, or sent out to work in factories suitable for females? He had a great respect for domestic labour, and was very glad to hear that the homes existed, for domestic servants required quite as much training as other workers. In regard to visiting, he thought that if girls were visited by officious ladies who had not the capacity for sympathising

with the girls, the visitors had much better stop at home. But if the girls knew some good and responsible person in the district from which they came, it would be of the greatest benefit to them in after-life.

Mr WHITMORE (Wigton) said he had had some experience of the girls from training homes. Mrs Chalker very justly remarked that the home was the home for an important period of a girl's life. There was a danger in that. The danger was that the girls would refuse to look upon their situations as their homes. It rather inculcated a spirit of independence in the poor girls, which would tend to their hurt in after-life. It was a danger to be avoided.

Mr MURRAY (Tynemouth) said he had to thank Mrs Chalker; but it struck him, in hearing her paper, that there must be a very high percentage of failures in some Unions. In his own Union they could get situations for all their girls direct from the Workhouse. There did not seem to be any credit given in the paper to the Guardians for their training of girls in the past. The Tynemouth Union had a very good record indeed.

Mr MOZLEY (Inspector of Poor Law Schools) said he quite believed the last speaker as to the good results from the Tynemouth Union, but he had a very great sympathy with the views expressed in Mrs Chalker's paper—so much that he had some difficulty in finding anything to say about it. Perhaps she was a little hard on the Workhouses. The difficulty was a very real and permanent thing in many Workhouses of finding domestic work for the girls to do, though a great deal was done in many Workhouses to meet the difficulty. It was a real obstacle, especially in the small Unions. In the larger ones the want was more or less met by the children's work in the matron's rooms and the other officers' quarters. In the smaller Unions there was no companionship for the girls after they left school, where, of course, they had met other children. Their lives must be most monotonous. That was against the children, and one could not but feel for them. Mr Murray referred to the desirability of a girl having a lady friend with whom to correspond. It was better the girl should take the initiative for herself; but it was difficult to fit this in with Acts of Parliament. They could not insist upon girls going to particular persons as friends. If they left things to take their course, they might get more natural communication, which was much to be preferred. He was very glad that Mrs Chalker mentioned the frequent hardship of long hours. He had known instances of boys and girls being at work from six in the morning till ten at night. This was a point to which their attention should be seriously directed. Mr Murray also mentioned putting girls to other employments besides domestic service. Some were sent to learn dressmaking, and some to the mills. That might be rather a loose kind of employment for them—(hear, hear)—but there were cases in which it was done, and to the advantage of the children, for they were thus helped to earn good and regular wages.

One great point which Mrs Chalker did not, he thought, touch upon was to secure that the girls should have wages from the time they first went out. It could always be secured with care. He was very glad to see the great improvement which was constantly taking place in Workhouse methods in regard to the management of children.

Mrs CHARLES CROPPER (Kendal) said she would be glad to see all girls get training between the time of leaving the Workhouse and taking their first situation. Ladies' Committees could insist upon having domestic work done before them. In her Union they told the industrial trainer a month beforehand what they wished to see the girls do, and the children were then taught that particular thing, and were very proud to do it when the Committee visited the Workhouse.

Mr ADAMS (Auckland) expressed the opinion that training homes were necessary for exceptional girls—those who were admitted at the age of twelve or fourteen, and needed to be kept away from bad surroundings. The paper dealt rather with the difficulties in exceptional Workhouses. He could not help thinking that in most Workhouses the industrial trainer could exercise proper supervision over the girls. In his Union they had had many girls who were very difficult to deal with, but they had been sent to homes with the best results. The Guardians had now fitted up proper appliances for teaching domestic work, and he was pleased to say the experiment had been successful.

The Rev. J. BRUNSKILL (East Westmorland) said he thought it was best for the children to be boarded out. He knew of a case where two boys were boarded out, and the foster-father having died, they were supporting the widow. He knew of no system so satisfactory in its general results.

Dr CAMPBELL (Garland Asylum) was very much disappointed that Mrs Chalker did not notice the question of boarding out children. A great number of people would tell them, and tell them correctly, of the Workhouse taint. He was inclined to think that the previous speaker was perfectly accurate in urging that the Guardians should board out the children under their charge. The Workhouse girls especially should be boarded out as early as possible. The Glasgow Guardians had taken infinity of trouble in this matter, and the children were boarded out in all parts of Scotland.

Alderman SPENCE (Tynemouth) said he had long been of opinion that they should give the Workhouse children more technical instruction in house-work, cooking, laundry work, and dressmaking. He had very great pleasure in moving a hearty vote of thanks to Mrs Chalker for her valuable paper.

Mr CAREY (Cockermouth) said that the boarding-out system had been adopted in Cockermouth Union with very satisfactory results. There was, however, a limit to the boarding-out system. Some children were suited for it and some were not. The great thing was to find good persons to put them with. Many of the Workhouse children were quite different from other children, as their condition

physically and mentally was wretchedly bad. The visiting should not be a mere formality. What was wanted was some one who would be a real substitute for good parents. He seconded the vote of thanks.

Mr RIDLEY (Hexham) said there had been no contrary views expressed in the course of the discussion. The paper was admirable as a guide for the large Unions. He strongly approved of Mrs Cropper's suggestion that the ladies in each locality should supervise the training of the children.

Mr BOSANQUET (Hon. Sec.) said it was only on their pressing it that Mrs Chalker consented to prepare a paper, and he thought the Conference would agree that the Committee had done well in urging her to write it. The subject was entirely different from boarding-out, which was a matter for much younger children than those whom Mrs Chalker referred to in the paper.

Mrs CHAMBERS (Sunderland) said that though she fully agreed that they might teach girls other work besides domestic service, yet as Guardians they should remember that the greatest need at the present time was properly trained domestic servants. Working people had a great ambition nowadays to put the girls to "genteel" occupations such as millinery and drapery, but in her opinion unless a girl showed a distinct aptitude for business she should be trained for domestic service.

The PRESIDENT said that the cost of maintaining children in the Workhouse varied very much, and that of the children in the homes would vary too. Much depended upon the salary of the matron. The establishment charges included, each child in the Kendal Home cost about £13 a year.

The vote of thanks to her having been carried with acclamation,

Mrs CHALKER said that the sum charged by the training homes varied from 3s. to 7s. a week. Mr Murray-Browne (L.G.B. Inspector) kindly visited the homes in Carlisle some years ago, and he then advised her not to place the charge for girls too low. They had fixed it at 4s., but this did not pay expenses. It was in consequence of watching the career of Workhouse girls that she was led to arrange a system of training for them. Girls who had been at the Home started at a wage of £9 or £10 a year. She was sorry that any one there suggested that ladies would be officious and unsympathetic. The girls as a rule regarded the ladies as personal friends, and kept up a most useful correspondence with them. The Girls' Friendly Society was doing a noble work among these and other girls in every English-speaking community throughout the world. They did not want the children to look upon the Workhouse as their home, and there could never be that individual and personal relationship between the officials and the children that there could be between the ladies who associated themselves with the Girls' Friendly Society and with Poor Law work. Boarding-out was an entirely different subject, and she had not thought it right to introduce it into the present paper.

The following Paper was then read and discussed :—

INCREASED POWERS OF DETENTION FOR VARIOUS CLASSES IN WORKHOUSES.

BY JAMES MOULDING,

Clerk to the Guardians, Township of Toxteth Park.

The text of this paper was read at the North-Western Poor Law Conference, held at Chester in October last. At the request of your Committee I have revised it, and endeavoured to grapple with the difficulties of applying remedies to the evils I shall point out.

OF late years there has been steadily growing a distinct conviction among Poor Law thinkers that Boards of Guardians should have their power of detention extended when dealing with certain well-known classes of indoor poor, who, for the most part of their lives, are maintaining a continued strife with authority and preying upon the industry of others.

In introducing this subject to your notice, I do not intend my observations to apply to the vagrant, except so far as he may bring himself within the classes I shall shortly specially refer to, because I feel that if I were to include him I should open up the whole question of his treatment. It is not my wish, nor do I think it is yours, that to this extent I should enlarge the scope of my paper.

He has hitherto had legislation, departmental orders, always special papers, and sometimes special conferences, all to himself; and he might think it unfair and ungentlemanly on my part if I were to seek, behind his back and before a sympathetic audience, to interfere with these privileges. It probably may be, and in my opinion it is, the only practical solution of the vagrancy problem that, in the end, he should, before he starts, be required to prove that his aims are legitimate, and his goal consistent with his trade, calling, or pursuits; and that it should become a criminal

offence to take children on tramp ; but, be that as it may, he is too controversial a subject for me to enter upon to-day, beyond including him in the recommendations I shall make at the end of my paper.

With regard to the other classes, the power of detention is at present limited to children to whom the Guardians stand *in loco parentis* ; to children in respect of whom a resolution is passed under the provision of the first section of the Poor Law Act, 1889, to idiots and lunatics, and to persons suffering from infectious disease.

Before referring to other classes, I would point out the tenderness which the Legislature has shown to parental rights in requiring that, before the Guardians can pass a resolution under the Act of 1889 for the detention of a child, when not actually deserted, the parent must be under sentence of penal servitude or in prison for an offence against the child. It is not enough that a parent is under sentence for any other offence, or has committed a long string of offences, whether indictable or punishable on summary conviction. It is difficult to conceive a reason for this restriction. I believe that, if we could get at it, it would be found to be academical, and not based on practical experience. So far as the welfare of the child is concerned, is there any distinction between penal servitude and the incarceration of the parent, at short intervals, as an habitual drunkard or for other delinquencies ? and might not the statute be with propriety extended to children who are repeatedly admitted, and, when discharged, are dragged about by a dissipated parent from one scene of vice to another, escaping, by incessant movement, the attention of the education authority ?

From a correspondence, to which I shall advert, I will give a sample of the many replies of workhouse masters in referring to this class in the metropolis. They say : “ The children are most of the time in the

street without food, while the parents are looking up old associates for drink."

If we look for help to the Custody of Children Act, 1891, we shall find very little, if any. That statute slightly deflects the common law, and in the main simply gives power to the High Court to refuse the application of a parent for the custody of his child where he has abandoned, deserted, or allowed it to be brought up by somebody else. It proceeds on the assumption that some one, not the parent, has actual possession of the child, and, *primâ facie*, wrongful possession. Gentlemen of experience agree with me that, too, it is practically inoperative by the expense attending its working. Surely the Guardians, without being liable to defend their action in the High Court, might be able to refuse to deliver up a child to parents like these in the intervals of liberty, so that it might be saved from moral death, and prevented, if possible, in its turn, from preying on society and the rates.

Such a power would snap no tender family tie—invade no sacred domestic life or parental right already forfeited. But supposing for a moment the Guardians were acting too energetically. If the Act of 1889 were extended, as I suggest, the parent could, in a cheap way, invoke the summary jurisdiction of the justices, and obtain the revocation of the Guardians' resolution if it were passed on insufficient grounds.

At the same time there should be no release from the parents' liability to pay for or contribute to the child's maintenance: at no matter what cost and trouble, that liability should be enforced. A greater evil might be produced than the one we desire to remove, if it were declared that the attainment of a certain standard in vice would exempt a parent from this liability. It will probably be said that this would increase desertion. I think myself that it would. Well, if it did, no one would be worse off; but the parent must take all the inconvenient consequences of

that Act—he must break with the neighbourhood and his acquaintances, and be liable to arrest; the status of the child would be improved, the position of the Guardians towards it defined, and its association with destroying influences might be entirely cut off. At other Conferences, as a plea for laxity, it has been frequently asserted, and I do not deny, that some depraved parents have a genuine love for their offspring; indeed, the only bit of decent humanity in the vilest woman I have ever known was her affection for her children; but if it do not attain a depth sufficient to win her from licentiousness, debauchery, and crime, the welfare of the child should outweigh it.

Then as to adults. I have by circular described to one hundred masters of the largest workhouses in the kingdom five classes of indoor pauper to whom, in my opinion, further detaining powers should be extended. There may be other types, but I think I have named the prevailing ones.

The questions put to these officers are, Have you any or have you had any inmates of this kind, and do you agree with me as to further detention? In every case I have received answers in the affirmative.

CLASS I.

“Women who can neither be classed nor detained as idiots or lunatics, but so feeble in mental power that, outside, they are easily led into immoral relations with men, and who enter the workhouse from time to time either diseased or pregnant.”

These women are, in some cases, entitled more to our compassion than deserving our reproach. If they were a little weaker in mental calibre the law provides for their detention; but looking to the disastrous consequences, immediate and far-reaching, of their condition, is it not wise, is it not humane, to seek for authority to save them from themselves, and prevent their issue from becoming a permanent burden on the community? The general tone of the masters' replies

is that it is distressing to see numbers of this class coming into the syphilitic and lying-in wards. Would liberty be improperly assailed if these women were detained on a medical certificate and the order of a justice?

CLASS 2.

“Women who are mentally strong, but have more than one illegitimate child, and whose history justifies the inference that they do not care to place any restraint upon their vicious propensities.”

To a woman who has once fallen but who has not fathomed the depths of moral degradation, although she may properly be required to receive in the workhouse what assistance she wants, every effort should be made, and I know that in many unions Guardians are making such efforts, to help her back to respectability, and to restore her to society as a wage-earning unit; but when a woman comes into the workhouse to be confined of her second, third, and, in some instances that have actually occurred, her fourth illegitimate child, the ratepayers, I affirm, have a right through their representatives to put a check on her career. One master, not of a very large workhouse, says: “I have under my charge 39 women of this class with 70 illegitimate children.”

CLASS 3.

“Men and women who have spent a great part of their life in gaol or the workhouse.”

Some of these are ex-convicts and ticket-of-leave men. Others alternate between the gaol and the workhouse, and are nearly always in one way or other trying without work to get what they can out of the public. When dishonesty fails, they forthwith go to the relieving officer, and are constantly in and out of the workhouse, especially in the metropolis and other populous towns. Mr Chance, in his book on the better administration of the Poor Law, quoting Mr Henley, the late general Local Government inspector,

says: "At the workhouse of St George's Union, Fulham Road, there have been 17,309 discharges and 17,381 admissions during the year. One man discharged himself no fewer than 93 times, being nearly always readmitted on the evening of the day of his discharge. His only lengthened absence from the workhouse was when he was undergoing 21 days' imprisonment." Mr Henley adds: "I cannot but think that this is an abuse of Poor Law relief." The master, whom I consulted, of one of the smallest workhouses, says: "I have now 30 men to whom the severest penal measures should be applied." The problem now lies before us as to what is the best method of dealing with these habitual paupers and occasional criminals. It is not so easy to find a remedy as to point to the existence of an evil. But will it be seriously contended that it would be an unjustifiable attack on the liberty of the subject if they were forcibly prevented for a time from committing further depredations? The London and District Poor Law Officers' Association recently recommended, on the motion of Mr Vallance, Clerk to the Whitechapel Union, whose opinion on this subject is entitled to respect, that they should, on the order of a justice, be sent to a special workhouse, or to a farm colony, there to be detained for a period and trained to useful labour. This has still more recently been strongly recommended by a Conference of Metropolitan Guardians who, also urged that the fourth section of the Pauper Inmates Discharge and Regulation Act, 1871, should be amended so as to double the periods of detention in each of the three cases named therein. The Inebriates' Committee, too, appointed by, and which reported to, the Home Secretary in 1893, recommended that justices should have power to commit to institutions for lengthened periods, with or without previous punishment, habitual drunkards who are also guilty of ill-treating or neglecting their wives and families. If, however, this power

of committal and detention is obtained and exercised, it should be accompanied by the strictest discipline and the enforcement of a task of work equal at the least to what an independent labourer in the neighbourhood ordinarily performs. It might also be expedient as a deterrent, where the evidence is conclusive, to prosecute some of this class under the Vagrancy Act for neglecting to maintain themselves. The statute, however, requires as a condition precedent to a conviction, that the person charged is able wholly or in part to maintain himself by work or other means. In my experience it was in many instances very difficult, and in others impossible, to adduce proof of this, although the officers were absolutely certain that it existed. I am convinced, however, that more convictions could be obtained, with perfect justice, by greater vigilance and, of course, some additional expense. I have had an old dodger watched, and obtained a conviction on the evidence that he put down 3d. for a pint of beer. In other cases, the Guardians have successfully resisted appeals to the Quarter Sessions on evidence no stronger. This energetic action on their part was in its effect on this class distinctly advantageous to the ratepayers.

CLASS 4.

“Men and women who, by their vices, have brought on destitution and sickness, and have periodically to enter the workhouse for treatment, and who, when well, discharge themselves to again repeat their conduct.”

It is a matter of common notoriety that these exist in large numbers, especially in densely populated districts. Many of them are so wary that they evade conviction of any offence known to the law, but nevertheless indulge in vices to which sickness is an inevitable sequel. After this conduct has been again and again repeated, and proved beyond all doubt, it would be economical, humane, and perhaps deterrent,

if they were deprived of the opportunity of indulging in further debauchery by their consignment to institutions, or otherwise dealt with as is suggested for Classes 2 and 3. Or, that when they are able to bear it, the rigorous discipline for one, two, or three months that is applied or ought to be applied to the able-bodied inmates of an ordinary workhouse—the absence of liberty and indulgences—might induce this class to reflect on the advantages of a better life. The great difficulty here would be to prove that the effect was due to a specific cause, but it is a difficulty that could and ought to be grappled with and overcome.

CLASS 5.

“Cases not suffering from infectious disease, where, in spite of remonstrances, they insist upon discharging themselves before recovery, and who in consequence have again to enter the workhouse.”

Every one connected with Poor Law administration has met with these. They mostly come from a low wage-earning people — working, in some instances, under imperfect sanitary conditions, and who, when well, are constantly hovering on the confines of pauperism, and as soon as their normal position is made less eligible by sickness they have to seek public assistance; they, like the first class I have described, evoke commiseration rather than blame, because they require help generally through misfortune and not through misconduct. From various motives, they demand discharge before they are fit to resume their occupations, with the result that they shortly return worse than before. Might not the Guardians, in all loving-kindness, on the certificate of their medical officer, be able to say, “We must treat you a little longer”? There is, too, another reason for the detention of the sick—the greed of impecunious relatives. The master of one of the largest workhouses in the kingdom writes: “To me it is a sad and pitiable sight at times to see dying people taken out by their

relatives, in order that the club money may be drawn without deduction for maintenance or burial fees, and the authorities powerless to prevent such discharge." Although this cruel and detestable practice does not appear, I am glad to say, to be general throughout the country, my correspondent is not alone in his experience. I can hardly conceive a difference of opinion that the Guardians, with their medical officer, should have control over the sick to prevent vileness of this kind.

There is a remarkable unanimity and likeness in the communications made to me by masters of work-houses and other experienced persons. In various forms they have conveyed to me their opinions accompanied by the expression of hope that measures will be taken to more fully equip the Guardians to enable them with greater success to repress pauperism and stop it, as far as possible, at its source by the rescue of children in imminent danger of being drawn into its vortex.

In addition to the suggestions I have made, I would formulate the following:—

1. That it shall be an offence for persons without visible means of subsistence to wander from place to place—giving them the benefit of the First Offenders Act to operate as a judicial caution—unless such persons have a "way permit" from some reliable, properly constituted authority.

2. That it shall be an offence to cause children to wander, as aforesaid, under any circumstances whatever.

3. That the periods of detention named in the fourth section of the Pauper Inmates Discharge and Regulation Act, 1871, shall be doubled.

4. That the power of the Guardians to pass a resolution, under the Act of 1889 shall be extended to the children of habitual criminals.

5. That if, in the opinion of two medical men, a

woman is of feeble will power, and has entered the workhouse with syphilitic disease, or has had more than one illegitimate child, a Justice of the Peace shall have power to order her detention for a period not exceeding three months; and such order shall be renewable on the like evidence, if the circumstances remain unchanged.

6. That when inmates not suffering from infectious disease who wish to discharge themselves before recovery, the Guardians shall have power, on the certificate of their medical officer duly entered in his report book, to detain such person for further treatment for a period not exceeding one month.

7. That power should be given to a justice to commit habitual paupers and habitual drunkards to farm colonies.

I feel, sir, that I have but imperfectly discharged my task in calling your attention to this subject. It may be that the remedies proposed for the evils I have described, manifest to all, as will be admitted, are not the most suitable and effective, but I refuse to believe that, if I am wrong, Government departmental ingenuity is so far exhausted that it cannot hit upon the right ones. Legislation will, of course, be required to confer the powers I have ventured to suggest, and no doubt, if proposed, will be vehemently opposed in the name of liberty, that liberty which is a tyranny when enjoyed against the best interests of the State—that liberty, the outcome of a weak sentimentality, which sends children to Moloch, and the vicious prematurely to their end.

DISCUSSION.

Dr CAMPBELL (Medical Superintendent of the Garlands Asylum, Cumberland) said that he had listened with very great pleasure to Mr Moulding's able and suggestive paper, and agreed with most of what he had said. He had had considerable experience, had resided thirty-two years in asylums, and had had under his care during the twenty-

four years ended January last about 3,444 cases. A great number of degenerate, feeble-minded women, after having had more than one child, ended their days permanently insane in the public asylums. There were families that invariably produced criminal paupers and lunatics, and he cited the notorious American instance of the woman Julses. In seventy-five years the progeny of one woman had cost the United States of America at least one-and-a-quarter million dollars to maintain, being criminals, paupers, and insane. Something ought to be done to prevent the propagation of those degenerate types, and he thought there was a time coming when the people of Great Britain would take a different view from what they did at present. The liberty of the subject had been considered so sacred that any interference even of the kind proposed had been considered wrong, but the evil was increasing at such a rate that things would soon be regarded from another point of view. To-day more attention was devoted to a man's property than to his mental condition. If a man became insane, they put his property in Chancery so safely that perhaps he could never get it out again (laughter), but little or no interest was taken in the welfare of the man himself. But the time was approaching when the propagation of the criminal, the pauper, and the insane, would be restricted in one way or another. (Cheers.)

Miss PEASE (Newcastle) was of opinion that small homes were very desirable for the treatment of feeble-minded young women. They would prevent them from making shipwreck of their lives. A small home started at Morpeth last year had been very successful. Only one girl had been restless, and had to be sent away; all the rest had been greatly benefited. The British Medical Association and the Charity Organisation Society, in what was a most dreadful statement, had shown that it was impossible for such girls to go to service. The homes should be built to accommodate not more than twelve girls. If they were larger the matron could not give personal supervision. The initial expenses need not be heavy, from £100 to £200. It was neither necessary nor just that voluntary help should be called upon to do the work; public funds should defray the expenses.

Mr CRAIGHILL (Gateshead) said that when the public realised the number of vagrants that at present roamed about the country at their own sweet will, he thought that they would agree that it was time something should be done to restrict, not the liberty, but the license. Restriction would not harm the deserving man at all, but would stop the wretched tramps who wandered about with their children seeing what they could get.

The Rev. H. WHITMORE (Wigton) said that the girls at St Mary's Home, Carlisle, had been able to earn something like £600 or £700 a year in laundry work.

Canon WATERTON explained that was not such a home as Miss Pease spoke of. It was a penitentiary.

The Rev. Father BOURKE (Wigton) mentioned the case of a man in his Union who had during the last fourteen years been in the habit of going in and out of the workhouse whenever he pleased. Was there no legislation by which that sort of thing could be prevented?

Mr McNULTY (Middlesborough) regretted that there was no distinction made between the *bona-fide* working man and the tramp. He thought Guardians should have the power to make a distinction. At present a man was detained till nine or ten o'clock and prevented from getting work.

Mr COULSON (South Shields) said that the paper referred to classes of persons which presented continual difficulties in the larger workhouses. He entirely agreed with Mr Moulding that there was need for further powers of dealing with the feeble-minded and other classes mentioned by him, more especially the "ins and outs." In his own Union he could give the case of a man who simply lived in the workhouse, the jail, and the Durham County Asylum. The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was doing a good work, but he thought the powers of the Guardians should be enlarged in the same direction. At present Guardians were powerless to prevent pregnant women coming into the Union again and again.

Mr MURRAY (Tynemouth) thought there was no chance for feeble-minded girls except in such homes as that at Morpeth. If a doctor certified that a girl was insane, or an imbecile, she had to stay in an asylum or some institution. Every vagrant's child should have a certain amount of schooling every year. Double detention would be the best thing for vagrants. Workhouse masters had discretionary power with regard to *bona-fide* working men. He moved a vote of thanks to the reader of the paper.

Mr BROWELL seconded.

Mr DAWSON (Local Government Board Inspector) said the subject was far too large and far too full of detail to be grappled with in the time at their disposal. The only way of increasing the power of detention was not only to lengthen the period of notice, but to insist that an inmate must remain in the house a certain time before being able to give notice. He could not deal with all the classes referred to. However desirable the remedy might be, he did not think that Parliament would create any fresh offences in order to provide it. He would like to add his tribute of praise to the pains and trouble which Miss Pease and other ladies were taking on behalf of feeble-minded girls; but however good the homes might be for girls, they left the case of the women untouched. Every workhouse master had discretion, if he reported the circumstances afterwards to the Guardians, to release *bona-fide* working men early in the day. But he (Mr Dawson) was profoundly sceptical as to the existence "on the road" of the *bona-fide* working men of whom they heard so much. If an artisan belonged to any trade union or friendly society he got an allowance to maintain him while searching for work. (Cheers.)

Mr MURRAY (Cockermouth) said the reader of the paper wanted to introduce an entirely new principle into English law, to detain people with a view to prevent them from committing certain offences. He was quite in favour of detaining feeble-minded girls, but why not also feeble-minded boys? [The President.—They cannot do so much mischief.] He disagreed with the Inspector and his namesake that there were very few working-men casuals. There were many. Workhouse masters found it very hard to make any distinction between the casuals. He had great sympathy with the movement for detaining tramp children. It was a great shame that tramps should be allowed to drag children up and down the country year after year without giving them any schooling, or affording them the means of earning a subsistence. It was a national question.

Dr KEENAN (Middlesborough) said it seemed to him that Mr Moulding did not propose, as the previous speaker suggested he did, to punish a crime before it was committed. The tramps had committed a crime, that of bringing into the world children who could not support themselves in an honest manner. It was the source of most of the crime and destitution in the country.

Mr COULSON moved :—“That this Conference is of opinion that, in the interests of the children of vicious and depraved parents, increased powers of detention should be given to magistrates or Guardians; and that this Conference is of opinion that those powers should be extended, or further powers be given, with regard to persons in the habit of entering or leaving Workhouses.”

Mr MARSH (Sunderland) seconded, suggesting that the words “especially weak-minded women who increase illegitimacy” should be added.

Mr MOULDING suggested that the recommendations at the end of his paper should form the resolution upon which the Local Government Board should be invited to initiate and promote legislation. (Hear, hear.) He thanked members for the way in which they had received his paper. He was in favour of making vagrancy a punishable offence.

Mr CRAIGHILL moved that the Conference adopt the recommendations in the paper, and forward them to the Local Government Board.

Mr SCOTT (Tynemouth) seconded.

The Rev. Father BOURKE moved, “That increased powers of detention for various classes, including feeble-minded girls, are urgently required.”

Mr LAIRD (Cockermouth) seconded.

Mr COULSON withdrew his resolution.

There was a show of hands, when 18 voted for the amendment and 24 against, and Mr Moulding's recommendations were accordingly adopted, and ordered to be sent to the Local Government Board.

WEDNESDAY, 14TH JULY 1897.

The Conference reassembled at 9 A.M. Private business was taken first.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEXT YEAR.

The PRESIDENT said that the first question was the place of meeting for next year.

Mr ESKDAILE moved, and Mr WALKER (Middlesborough) seconded, "That the next meeting be held at Carlisle."

The Rev. Canon WATERTON (Carlisle) said he could promise the Conference a hearty welcome there. At the same time, he thought there were disadvantages in meeting in a large town, as the attention of members was diverted from the Conference. It was not only during the meeting, but in their private conversation afterwards, that the Conference was useful. If a change was necessary, why not go to Keswick?

The Rev. Father BOURKE moved, and the Rev. J. BRUNSKILL seconded, "That the Conference meet again at Gilsland."

Mr CRAIGHILL suggested that the question of a change in the place of meeting might be considered during the ensuing year.

Mr ESKDAILE withdrew his motion.

Mr WALKER then moved, "That Carlisle be the next place of meeting."

Mr FOOTE seconded.

On a show of hands, Gilsland was selected as the place of meeting for next year by 26 to 20 votes; and the second week in July was provisionally named as the date of the Conference.

The HON. SECRETARY said that the last Tuesday in March—29th—would probably be a convenient day for the Committee to meet and choose subjects.

The following Committee was appointed. *Northumberland*—John Beattie, Esq., 5 Summerhill Grove, Newcastle; C. B. P. Bosanquet, Esq., Rock Hall, Alnwick; Alderman Spence, Chirton Cottage, North Shields; Rev. Canon Walker, Whalton Rectory, Newcastle. *Durham*—W. Brantingham, Esq., St Bede's Park, Sunderland; R. Peverell, Esq., South Church, Bishop Auckland; George Craighill, Esq., Gateshead. *Cumberland*—Rev. A. F. Curwen, Harrington Rectory, Cumberland; Mrs Chalker, 8 George Street, Carlisle; J. M. Ridley, Esq., Walwick Hall, Humshaugh-on-Tyne. *Westmorland*—The Hon. Mrs C. Cropper, Tolston Hall, Kendal; James Cropper, Esq., Ellergreen, Kendal; Mrs Lloyd Wilson, Westworth, Cockermouth. Mr Cropper was re-elected President, and Mr C. B. P. Bosanquet, Hon. Secretary. Mr J. W. Gibson was appointed Treasurer, with a seat on the Committee, Mr Bosanquet having mentioned that the Committee was in the habit of meeting in the office of the Newcastle Guardians, and that they would like their host, Mr Gibson, to come as a member rather than as a visitor.

Mr Craighill, Mr Beattie, and Mrs Charles Cropper were elected representatives to the Central Conference Committee.

It was resolved, on the motion of Mr BROWN (Tynemouth), seconded by Mr CRAIGHILL, "That the Hon. Sec. be empowered to convene interim Conferences on matters of urgent practical importance."

Mr CRAIGHILL moved, and Mr G. ARMSTRONG (Sunderland) seconded, "That the Conference recommend that every Board of Guardians, irrespective of distance, should be empowered, if they think fit, to send two Guardians and the Clerk to the Central Conference at the expense of the rates." This was carried unanimously.

THE PROPER PRINCIPLES FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF OUT-RELIEF, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE LEGAL OBLIGATIONS OF RELATIONS.

BY THE REV. A. F. CURWEN,

Chairman of the Whitehaven Board of Guardians.

THE principle of the Poor Law of 1834 is :—1st. That no one shall be allowed to perish through want of what is necessary for sustaining life and health. 2nd. Every destitute parent is bound to demand and obtain from the Guardians what is necessary for sustaining the life and health of his or her children ; neglect of this duty is criminal. 3rd. It is obligatory on the Guardians of the poor to afford sufficient relief to all persons unable to maintain themselves ; refusal is an indictable offence.

I wish the Conference to keep these principles clearly in their minds, while I proceed to discuss the question of the administration of Outdoor Relief. The subject has been approached over and over again, from every point of view, and I feel powerless to add to it anything that will be new. But as there are always new Guardians taking the place of the old, I feel that it is well that they should take part in such

discussions, and, while they learn what principles have governed their predecessors, that they on their part should throw fresher and perhaps brighter light on such a well-worn but momentous subject.

There are few who can help being struck with the system of hopeless dependence which the Poor Law has produced among a section of the community. No phase of our pauperism is more to be deplored than this. As a rule our people are proverbial for their independence, courage, self-reliance; and if anything tends more than another to condemn the administration of the Poor Law, it is the fact that so many, in spite of our natural characteristics, are kept chronically in a state of abject dependence on the dole of relief.

Some indeed of the very poor are noble examples of independence, but we must all know instances which show that fairly well-to-do persons are not above the parish relief if they can get it for themselves or family.

The judicious treatment of such cases of dependence is a great difficulty. Of course, after a long life of reliance on the parish, cure is hardly to be expected. Injudicious relief has been in no small degree the cause of the dependence, yet much may be done by care and patience. Unless the applicant can give some evidence (I mean in the case of the young, who, owing to misfortune, are beginning a life of dependence) that he or she is trying to depend on him or herself, the Workhouse should be offered. Hard as the rule may be thought, and painful to administer, it will be found ere long to reduce the sufferings caused by this sad habit of dependence on the parish, and which the weekly dole is unable to avert.

Without habits of industry a nation cannot be prosperous. The Poor Law and its results may be judged by its effects on industry in that class of the community with which it deals, though the cause and

effect of injudicious relief as it affects industry is not always apparent at first sight.

To discourage lack of industry, or rather indolence, in widows is not easy, for it is difficult to act wisely without regard to sentiment, or the remarks which may be made by superficial observers. The problem is how to steer clear of harshness, and at the same time not to pauperise and promote indolent habits. Relief being usually given so readily to widows, and the very fact of this sad condition being in most Unions almost sufficient in itself to secure parish relief, it is not to be wondered at that habits of industry are seriously discouraged. Relief is often granted, and continued for years, almost without inquiry, even though the children are almost grown up. This is negligent relief; but even granting relief as a matter of course in early widowhood is a mistake. It is a check to industry, to say nothing of its effect on the thrift of all young couples in the neighbourhood. Even to a hard-working woman the notion that she has but to ask in order to secure the parish money, is sufficient to prevent many from relying on their own efforts. Such cases should be carefully watched, and if there are evidences of a loss of industry following outdoor relief it should at once be stopped. Less hardship will ensue by offering the House than by allowing this habit to be formed. If this step be taken the "House" will not be accepted, but the threat and withdrawal of out-door relief will bring back the habit of industry and self-reliance. In the long run also it will be found far more humane to refuse outdoor relief to women without children than to undermine their habits of industry. Even to widows with families out-relief should not be granted as a matter of course, nor should it be permanent, and so reckoned upon as to make it take the place of industry. If this is found commencing, either by the person professing to be earning less, or if it is evident that the parents and children do not

make every effort and avail themselves of every means of labour, the outdoor relief should cease at once. This may seem hard, but it is not, for not only is the person, him or herself to be considered, but the fate of a whole family of children is at stake. Are those to grow up into industrious and independent members of the community, or to swell the band of hereditary paupers?

The discouragement of thrift is one of the most obvious evils of the present Poor Law system. A man who for years has been in receipt of good wages is taken ill, or meets with an accident, at once he applies for parish relief. Most Boards give it at once. If his wife be asked if he belongs to any club, in most cases the answer is no. The Parish is the only club he has looked to. The little self-denial required in order to have paid into a club was beyond him. In such cases I cannot but think it would be wise if outdoor relief was refused. By the strict letter of the law out-relief should not be given to a member of a club for the simple reason that he is not destitute. But the absurdity of this is so obvious that the rule is repeatedly broken. In fact very few outdoor paupers are really destitute; if they were, starvation would be their lot, for the pittances they receive are in few cases sufficient to keep body and soul together. The right policy in cases just referred to is plain. Thrift is the one, if not the only antidote, to pauperism, and every act of a Board of Guardians should as far as possible encourage this habit. True the law in this respect is unwise, but it is so clearly wrong that it is broken and set at naught by the tacit consent of the authorities. Let me reiterate here, that outdoor relief should be rigidly refused in cases of improvidence, but the most liberal outdoor relief should be given to those who have done what they can to help themselves. The whole Union should know of this policy, and the whole Union would soon reap the benefit. Why should things go against them in the time of old age or misfortune?

Deception is one of the vices for which the Poor Law has to answer. There is deception as to earnings, as to the impossibility to get work, as to the wages for that work, as to the assistance received from friends, as to the possibility of children helping, and, in fact, as to every point. The reason is plain. The Poor Law is naturally most liberal to those who seem the worst off,—destitution is the key to relief. Each applicant, therefore, makes the worst he can of his case, and Boards of Guardians too often do not go deep enough into each case so as to sift it thoroughly. The chances are greatly against the deception being found out, for the relieving-officer seldom has the time, or does not take the trouble, to seek for information which the Guardians show little anxiety to have. And if the deception does come to light, there are no penalties. The relief can be stopped it is true, but it seldom is for more than a few weeks. The action that should be taken in these cases of deception is obvious. It should be discouraged; but the extent to which it prevails makes it evident that the present mode of dealing with such fraud is not successful. The real cause of the evil is the imperfect investigation made by the relieving-officer into the circumstances and history of the individual. True, there are many cases where the deception is apparent on the face of them, as, for instance, a person existing solely on eighteenpence a week; but more often the deception is not so apparent, and the real cause of its success in gaining outdoor relief, and its consequent growth, is caused by a knowledge throughout the Union of the imperfect character of the investigation. Wherever deception is detected outdoor relief should be refused altogether, and the House alone given.

One of the saddest considerations in connection with Parish relief is the encouragement the system gives to children to neglect parents. Owing to the frequent neglect of a thorough investigation, cases go

on for years in which parents receive an allowance from the Union though their children may be quite able to keep them. Very often it happens that persons apply for relief in the hope that Guardians will take upon themselves the trouble of summoning the children in order to make them refund to the Union the cost of their support. When this is done the House should be given, and outdoor relief invariably refused. After admission to the Workhouse, proceedings should at once be taken before the Magistrates. It is to be regretted that the law does not allow a wider circle of relations to be responsible for their worn-out connections—daughters, the children of daughters, and even nephews and nieces, should, if they are well-to-do, be compelled by law to support their own flesh and blood.

The action in all these cases is simple. First must come the rigid investigation, and if then it be found that the children are able to support the parent, either wholly or in part, outdoor relief should be refused and indoor relief given, and steps taken against the children to make them refund to the Union the cost of maintenance. It may be said, Why not give outdoor relief, and take proceedings against the children, and so not punish the parent for the fault of the child? This would be a mistake. First, because a great many cases will disappear by offering the House. Many children, though having no scruple as to their parents receiving outdoor relief, nor seeming to care much for their privations, object to their going into the House, as that would be a reflection upon themselves; and also, it frequently happens that parents and children are combining together in order to get as much as they can out of the Union. The only way of breaking up this arrangement, is firmly to give the House and decline out-relief. I may here observe, that the consideration of the applicant's family, and the expense which he or she would put the Union to if the House were really enforced, should not be taken into account. The par-

ticular characteristics which should decide the question as to in or out-relief are, however, of great importance. The wishes of the individual should not be considered, nor the immediate cost to the Union, but the abstract question as to whether, judging from the circumstances of the case, it will be more permanently benefited by the one or the other form of relief. Nor is this all, for the consequences of relief on others must be also considered—that is, whether or no certain vices, of which the natural effects are personified in the applicants, are likely to be encouraged or discouraged by one form of relief or the other, both in the persons themselves and among the inhabitants of the Union generally.

I now return to the best way of treating pauper widows, so as to secure the greatest advantage to themselves and to the Union to which they belong.

In the first place, it must be remembered that there are widows and widows. The simple fact of a woman having lost her husband is not conclusive evidence that she is deserving of liberal or permanent outdoor relief solely on that account. Investigation may prove her to be an object of pity. She has never been on the Parish, her husband belonged to a club, she has had the money but it was hardly enough to pay funeral expenses and keep her for a few weeks. What is she to do? She must be relieved, and out-relief must be given as liberally as possible. But is it to be given in perpetuity? Is she to regard it as an annuity for life, or until she marries again? In most cases there is no help for it but to regard it as permanent, until all her children, but one, are able to earn something; but directly each child leaves school the amount of relief should be reduced.

This is more important than at first sight may appear, for such relief often prevents widows from urging on their children to do as much as they might to obtain employment. They know the relief will be reduced when the children are at regular work, and so

they keep them doing nothing, or only odd jobs which are not likely to attract the attention of the Relieving Officer. This has a twofold evil. First, the children learn deceit; and second, they get into habits of indolence which are seldom eradicated. A deduction, therefore, should be made from the mother, whether the child is at work or not, where it is of an age to be employed. As soon as all the children but one are off the widow's hands, then if she is well and strong the money should be stopped, for an able-bodied woman should certainly keep one child.

I now consider the case of a different kind of widow, one whose husband has done nothing to provide for the future. What is to be done with such a case? As a rule such an applicant obtains relief just as readily as the other. The password "widowhood" secures her what she wants without any further inquiry. Looking, however, deeply, and disregarding the individual, I doubt if this is wise, for it promotes improvidence, and a reliance on the Union on the part of many men well able to provide for their families in case of their death. Further, that the widows of such children are likely in their turn to follow in their parents' steps and provide nothing for themselves, but to rely on the Union on every emergency. It is best in such cases that only the minimum of relief should be granted. The refusal of out-relief would in theory be the right step, and perhaps the kindest, looking not to the present but the future, but public opinion would not sanction it. But by granting only the minimum relief in such cases, thrift would gradually be taught, and many thoughtless and careless people would learn that reckless conduct, during years of comparative prosperity, would debar them from enjoying the same comforts in distress as the careful and the prudent.

There is a third class of widows, unfortunately not an uncommon one. These are utterly reckless, drunken, and almost hopeless creatures, whose homes have for

years been the abodes of misery, and whose whole example to their children has been such as to render them permanent failures, socially and morally, almost certain. Not a few of these get outdoor relief when they become widows, but such a policy is a great mistake. If a widow with children has been living in such a state, it is the greatest cruelty to the children to allow her outdoor relief, and so encourage her in her mode of living, and in continuing as an evil example to her offspring. Drinking to excess should be enough to cut off the out-relief from anyone, but especially from a widow with children. So far from preventing her from coming into the Workhouse, in spite of the cost every effort should be made to compel her to come in, in order that her children may be rescued.

The granting of out-relief to persons who have become paupers in consequence of drink is quite unjustifiable, the least evil being that the grant is nothing more than a subsidy to the publican. Yet many Guardians do not regard this habit as a bar to out-relief. Scarcely a meeting comes off without such cases coming up, and thus serious encouragement is given to drunkenness. This action is adopted from insufficient consideration, for the absolute duty of stopping outdoor relief in all cases of drunkenness must be but too obvious to anyone who thinks carefully on the subject. These cases should be closely watched, and outdoor relief be firmly declined, without considering the number of the family who will come into the Workhouse. Even if a large family be brought to the House, it is far better and cheaper in the long run to put the Union to this cost, than to allow them, by a trifle of out-relief, to grow up with the wretched example of drink before them.

Once more let me insist, that one of the chief causes of pauperism is the fact that in many instances out-door relief is granted without due investigation being made into the circumstances of each case. It

is most essential to know the wages earned when at regular employment, and the earnings at the time when the application is made. These matters are very difficult to get at. The statements made by applicants are rarely to be relied upon, and insufficient information is often furnished by the Relieving Officer. The consequence is that Boards are constantly deceived, and know that they are so. I recall to mind a case of a well-dressed woman applying for relief, her husband was in South Africa and sent her nothing; out-relief was refused, as she was a deserted woman. Within an hour the Relieving Officer met her in the bank cashing an order for a considerable amount, which she had received from her husband. My experience is that few ever make a proper statement, nearly all prevaricate, and yet relief is given in hundreds of cases on this unsatisfactory basis. In cases of fraud or deceit, or whenever information is purposely withheld, out-door relief should be stopped.

The question as to whether a man belongs to a Friendly Society, or has been thrifty in one way or another, is most important in considering his relief. We all know what the law is in such cases. I maintain, however, that we should, both in the interest of the poor and of the ratepayer, be as considerate as possible to those, who, whether from long illness or from any other cause, are obliged to come on the Union, but who have endeavoured to provide for themselves.

The question of the existence of relations is one which is much neglected, because it is so troublesome, and it is so much easier to grant a little relief than to take the trouble of investigating a matter closely. The easier we make the obtaining of this relief, and the more readily we grant it to a case where there are relations who should legally come forward, and who are in a position to do so, by so much the more do we loosen the family tie, and encourage the unnatural

desire now so often met with of avoiding the support of old parents and relations, and handing them over to the Union. Boards should not grudge the spending of time and money in hunting up legally responsible relatives, even if the cost of doing so be greater than the amount of relief saved. It often happens that a very large number of persons are in receipt of parochial relief who are not without resources, or who have relations able to maintain them but who are never called upon to do so.

How will a strict investigation affect the poor? Who would fear it? Not the deserving. Those whose cases would bear the closest investigation would be only too glad to have them looked into, for they would be the more likely to receive liberal relief. Those who are not deserving of consideration would object to it strongly. They would know that in appealing to the officer they must tell the truth, for if they made any false statements, as they frequently do with such success, careful investigation would find them out, and their dishonesty would make out-relief hopeless. The very consideration of this would prevent hundreds from coming to the parish. The habitual drunkard, the reckless and improvident, would learn wisdom; it would render many squalid homes happy, and turn them to the abodes of comfort.

In many Unions there is an annual or six-monthly revision list of so-called permanent cases. It is supposed to contain all those persons who are so old or so afflicted as to render it practically certain that they will receive out-relief all their lives. It is true that the law does not recognise permanent out-door relief, and that the regulations require that all cases should be gone into periodically and be reconsidered by the Guardians. The fact, however, of a case only coming up once or twice a year, makes the relief almost the same thing as a permanent annuity. Nothing perhaps tends to promote imposition more than

this annual revision. When a case is settled for a year, the chances are great that the Relieving Officer never goes near it till just before the next revision when he knows it must come up before the Board. He should of course visit all permanent cases at least every three months, but I fear few can find time for this.

It is not an uncommon thing to find Guardians who so mistake their duty as to urge the claims of poor people who are not destitute. This man has a horse and cart, and earns a precarious living; give him a little assistance and he will do well. This widow has incurred debts during the long illness of her husband; she is a most meritorious woman, give her a little relief, for a year or two, and she will be enabled to clear off her debts, and live comparatively at ease. Another has a small shop; give her a few shillings a week, and she will be able to make a living out of it. All these claims should be rejected. They hold good when made as appeals to our charity, but should fall on deaf ears when the appeal is made to us as Guardians of the public purse. To admit them is to do an injustice to the ratepayers. A subvention to a shop, places it at once in a position to undersell the small shopkeepers who pay rates. To give relief to men or women who can work and maintain themselves, though with difficulty, reduces the price of labour, and so induces a far greater evil than the one it professes to remedy.

In conclusion, let me state that although my experience as a Guardian extends over a period of more than thirty years, yet it has been confined to one Union. I have perhaps generalised too much; nor should I omit to say, that though I greatly desire it, yet many of the plans I recommend are not fully carried out in my own Union. "*Meliora proboque deteriora sequor.*" There is nothing new in this paper. I do not see how there could be; the views are

old, and perhaps their greatest merit is that they are, I believe, in accord with those of the gentleman who has so long and ably presided over this Conference, and whom we all hope may preside over it for many years to come.

DISCUSSION.

Mr MURRAY (Cockermouth) said he had put his views on paper to save time. He contended that while out-door relief ought to be most carefully administered, there was not much force in the argument that an allowance in the nature of an old-age pension was pauperising. Pensions of civil servants, judges, and military and naval officers, were not regarded as pauperising. As Poor Law Guardians they were, of course, cognisant of the fact that they could not legally relieve any but the destitute. Yet the term destitute might be variously interpreted by Poor Law administrators, and might admit of a different meaning for different persons, according to the standard of life to which they might have been accustomed, or according to their physical and mental needs. Roughly speaking, however, destitution was inability to obtain the average necessities of life. In the case of many applicants for relief it was difficult to discover whether the person was really destitute or not. Orthodox Poor Law administrators pretended to have discovered an infallible method of finding out whether the condition of the applicant was such as to require relief, by offering the House; and in a circular letter from the Local Government Board in 1871, recommending in-door in preference to out-door relief, it was naively stated that when the Workhouse test is offered it is not accepted in more than one case in ten. Judging from the number of legally recorded deaths from starvation, and the very large percentage of old people existing in a state of semi-starvation, which had come under his own observation, he was not so sure that the test was by any means perfect. Furthermore, after having proved their destitution by submitting to the Workhouse test, what was the result? Generally speaking, imprisonment in the house for the remainder of their life. No wonder the number of paupers represent such a small proportion of the really destitute. He would ask the members of the Conference whether they were prepared to swear that the desire to keep down the number of paupers, and the expense incidental thereto, did not exceed their desire to relieve the destitute? At the risk of being regarded as unpractical and revolutionary, he was going to affirm that the primary proper principle for the administration of out-relief was to relieve all destitute, aged, and infirm people, who were of cleanly habits and able to take care of themselves, or having friends or relatives willing to take care of them. It was perhaps too much to hope that relieving-officers would be encouraged to

hunt up all destitute aged people, and put forward their claims for relief. Yet he did not know why, if Guardians were sincerely desirous of doing their duty, this should not be done. He had no doubt that in years to come their descendants would regard as a strange anomaly the fact, that alone of all bodies Boards of Guardians were praised in proportion as they shirked or neglected their duties. The test of efficiency on the part of a Board of Guardians should be whether or not it thoroughly relieves all who are destitute within the area of its administration. He believed that, in the course of time, society would perceive that it was just as beneficial to the country at large to prevent destitution, as it was to prevent children growing up in ignorance, or to prevent insanitary conditions from developing. It is urged, in opposition to generous administration of out-relief, that if it is known that relief can be had for the asking, improvidence and thriftlessness will be encouraged. He was one of those who believed that thrift, as popularly understood, should not always be regarded as a virtue. There was a kind of thriftiness practised by some people that starved both the mind and the body, and among the poorer class of workers he was afraid that was the only kind of thrift possible. Fifty per cent. at least of the working class barely received sufficient wages, even when working full time, to enable them to live up to that standard which health, decency, and the general welfare of their families demand. Therefore, what with illness and broken time, a very large proportion but barely existed from day to day; and when old age came upon them they had the choice of dying by gradual starvation or applying to the Poor Law. A large number, owing to harsh administration, chose the former of the two alternatives. All must admit that among the respectable poor there existed a strong aversion to entering the Workhouse, and advantage was often taken of that aversion by Guardians to get rid of applicants and thus keep down the relief bill. Only a few weeks ago he heard a Guardian remark, that if a certain woman got out-relief half the people in the street in which she lived would be applying at the next meeting, as they were all as poor as herself. That remark indicated, no doubt, very largely the feeling of many Guardians in opposing out-relief. If an aged or infirm destitute person applied for out-relief, and was incapable of taking care of himself, relief should be given no matter what the consequences. Aged and infirm destitute people were not so numerous in proportion to the rest of society that Guardians need fear a great addition to the rates by boldly doing their duty. But even though an effective discharge of their duties did make an appreciable difference to local burdens, he had no doubt that very little difficulty would be experienced in getting relief from the Imperial exchequer if local bodies desired. The appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the subject of old-age pensions, and the general unanimity of public opinion in favour of old-age pensions, convinced him that if Guardians would take a forward step in the direction of

more generous administration of out-relief, they would meet with the commendation of the general public, be regarded with greater interest, treated with greater respect, and placed on a higher plane as local administrative bodies. As to the legal obligations of relatives, he had little hope of any obligations being discharged unless based on other grounds than legality. Experience proved that when a parent became chargeable to the parish, owing to want of filial affection and respect on the part of those capable of maintaining him, the expense and trouble and unpleasantness of collecting the money far outweighed any benefit which accrued to the rates from the small percentage collected. If it was considered that children should continue to maintain their parents or grand-parents when infirmity prevented them from maintaining themselves, the best way would be to prosecute and punish them. There was some excuse, however, for many of those whose parents had to apply to the parish. Generally, when there is a lack of natural affection and respect, the parental duties have been largely neglected, and parental responsibility greatly disregarded. We must also remember that parents were responsible for having children, but children were not responsible for having parents. Putting to one side, however, the question of the legal obligations of relatives, he trusted the Guardians would return to their respective Unions, determined to use their influence in securing more generous treatment to aged and infirm recipients of out-door relief, knowing that such generosity is in accordance with the spirit of the Poor Law, and that it did not involve any of those disastrous consequences which ensued from the granting of indiscriminate relief to able-bodied persons previous to the Poor Law Reform Act of 1834.

Mr Murray, whose read address had been impatiently listened to, then resumed his seat.

The Rev. Father BOURKE regretted the attitude of the meeting towards the previous speaker.

The Rev. Canon WATERTON said that too great facilities were offered in some Unions to persons for putting their parents into the Workhouse on condition of paying something towards their maintenance. It was an abuse that Workhouses should be regarded as boarding-houses. (Hear, hear.)

Miss KING (Keswick) stated that at Keswick the relieving-officer sent round postcards a week before the relief committee met, with names of applicants for relief, thus enabling inquiries to be made.

Mr BOLAM (Chester-le-Street) said that the same plan was carried out most successfully in his Union.

Mr MURRAY (Tynemouth) thought that for the sake of the children it was better in the case of widows to dole out a small sum and keep the children from the Workhouse. Again, in the case of small shopkeepers, they had better give them some relief to enable them to tide over difficulties than compel them to enter the house. Club members should be liberally dealt with.

The Rev. E. H. SUGDEN (Whitehaven) said Mr Curwen's aim was most fully to relieve real destitution, and to help people to help themselves.

The Rev. Canon WALKER (Castle Ward) agreed that there were cases in which it was better to give out-relief than to compel applicants to come into the Workhouse. In the rural districts people were more ready than those in the towns to receive into their homes their aged parents and sick relatives ; and in rural districts Guardians were not so much dependent as in the towns upon the reports of relieving-officers. Two or three of the Guardians were nearly always personally acquainted with each case. But he was not sure that the Guardian was always the best witness in the matter of poor relief. His judgment was very apt to be warped by his sympathies, and he was apt to give more weight to his own case than to one brought up by another Guardian. Therefore the relieving-officer ought also to report upon cases, and supplement the information obtainable by the local Guardian. The application of the Workhouse test was seldom necessary in rural districts, and if it was it arose from some exceptional circumstances, such as waste or want of thrift. But in urban districts, where there were greater opportunities for withholding information, Guardians would have to rely upon careful relieving-officers or the Workhouse test. He advised Guardians who had recently taken up Poor Law work to study some of the excellent works which had been written showing the origin and progress of the Poor Law. They would in this way get true principles upon which to administer the law.

Mr MARSH (Sunderland) said that in his district they had an average of forty cases a week, and for Guardians to visit them would be an impossible task. It might be all very well in small Unions. In many cases, he was glad to say, the Guardians had been able to influence sons so as to save the rates and the dignity of the parents.

Mrs C. CROPPER expressed a hope that before Guardians offered widows the Workhouse they would consider whether the Workhouse was suitable for the reception of children. She had known a Union where the children took their meals at one table and imitated the imbeciles who were eating at the next one. (Shame.) She would most earnestly plead that the very best arrangements should be made for children both in the large and the small Unions. It was advisable to publish in the local papers, yearly or half-yearly, the names of those who received out door relief. In that way the list would be reduced.

Mr McNULTY (Middlesborough) said that the widows who were addicted to drink deserved no sympathy ; at the same time it was a great pity to force children into the Workhouse.

Mrs SPENCE WATSON (Gateshead) said that the experience of Manchester showed that with a little pressure, in the shape of the Workhouse test, many applicants were able to maintain themselves.

She hoped that there were very few Unions where the condition of things mentioned by Mrs Cropper prevailed.

Mrs CROPPER said that the state of things she had spoken of had been remedied some time ago.

Mr BOSANQUET said that Mr Murray, of Cockermouth, had referred to the efficiency of Boards of Guardians. Surely the test of efficiency of a Board of Guardians was the diminution, not merely the relief, of destitution within their district, and if strictness brought about that result the strictness was justifiable. With regard to the relief of the aged, it had been found necessary in his own Union to give special instructions to the relieving officers to communicate with the sons, if there were any, before the Board considered the application. Mr Murray, of Tynemouth, mentioned the small shopkeepers. He could only say that Guardians must not try to do the work of private charity. Guardians should make up their minds that out-door relief was a privilege, and that it should not be given to drinking people or to grossly improvident people, that it was a privilege reserved for respectable people who had decent and sanitary homes. He thought they must admit such a thing as partial destitution. Guardians did not ordinarily give maintenance relief outside the Workhouse, but they were bound to see that whoever received relief got adequate relief. It would be well if Guardians would have first applications for medical relief placed before them. Strict administration of out-relief tended eventually to the good of the poor as well as the reduction of the rates. Having mentioned the case of Marylebone, where outdoor relief had been much diminished owing to the action of Guardians who had joined the Board purely from a wish to improve the condition of the poor, Mr Bosanquet said Mr Curwen's principles were advocated not to save the rates, but for the good of the poor.

Mr CURWEN, in acknowledging a vote of thanks for his paper, said that where possible he would recommend that persons like small shopkeepers should have assistance in the form of a loan. If they were deserving they would return the money, and neither borrowers nor lenders would be the worse for the transaction.

The PRESIDENT said that the postcard system seemed to be a good one. It would be a great deal better if the poor would assist their parents and friends during their lifetime rather than reserve their money to provide them with a gorgeous funeral. Guardians in dealing with applications for relief ought to ask themselves whether it was a case which they would relieve out of their own pockets, and if it was not, then they ought not to give the money which was gathered, hardly enough, from hardworking people to support men who were not worthy of it. It was one of those subjects upon which everyone took a stricter view as he got more used to the work. He was not sure it had been altogether a bad thing to have an *advocatus diaboli* in the person of Mr Murray, of Cockermouth. (Hear, hear, and laughter.)

THE CLASSIFICATION OF LUNATICS, IMBECILES, AND IDIOTS,

AND WHETHER IT IS EXPEDIENT THAT THE LATTER
CLASSES SHOULD BE PLACED IN ASYLUMS DIFFERENT FROM THOSE PROVIDED FOR LUNATICS.

BY DR BOWMAKER, *Sunderland.*

THE subject to which I have to direct your attention to-day is one of very considerable importance, not merely to members of Boards of Guardians, but also to the community at large. While I have no claim whatever to be considered an expert, yet I trust I may be able to supply some material for useful discussion; indeed, should I succeed in arousing your interest in a grave and pressing problem, my efforts will not altogether be without result.

We hear a very great deal about an alarming increase in the number of cases of lunacy, and much has been said on both sides of this question. Whether this increase is more apparent than real is not for us on the present occasion to inquire; suffice it for our purpose to note, that whatever may be the actual position of affairs, there can be no doubt that proportionally a very much larger number of cases come under treatment than in years gone by. This at any rate is beyond question. The Lunacy Commissioners, as the result of very careful investigations, have declared that the number of cases of lunacy has not increased out of proportion to the increase of population, and have specified very distinctly the reasons which may be advanced for the increase in the number of cases brought under treatment in our asylums. They point out that there has been a steady change in the attitude of the public towards these establishments, and that old prejudices have been broken down. So much has

been done to render our asylums attractive, and so completely have we changed our ideas as to restraint and control, that it is easy to believe that old prejudices have been removed. The operation of the 4s. grant is held responsible for a portion of the increase, in that cases which were previously dealt with by the Poor Law authorities in Workhouses have been removed to the various asylums.

However this may be, there can be no doubt that very generally throughout the country a very serious position of affairs has to be faced. Large extensions to already overgrown establishments are being called for, huge sums of money are being or are about to be expended in these additions. If it be true that the 4s. grant has caused Boards of Guardians to remove cases to the county asylums which might have been treated elsewhere, we must also bear in mind that very generally throughout the country we hear of acute cases being dealt with in Workhouses, owing to the inability to find accommodation for them. In some Unions the position is extremely serious. In one (the West Derby), over fifty per cent. of the total number of cases have been dealt with by the Guardians; and acute cases, which would have benefited by asylum treatment, have been compelled to remain in the Workhouse. If Boards of Guardians have relieved themselves under the 4s. grant of cases which did not require special treatment beyond that possible in the Workhouses, it is equally true that the Counties and County Borough Councils have neglected to provide, in many instances, for cases which should have come under their care.

All this, and very much more, might be said of the want of uniformity of action throughout the country. In some districts all cases, irrespective of class, are removed to the county asylum; in others, Boards of Guardians have provided suitable accommodation for chronic and harmless cases, and have thus relieved the

pressure. In the latter cases a very strong claim has been made out for the extension of the 4s. grant.

In addition to this want of uniformity of action, and the evident strain on the accommodation provided, we cannot view without considerable disturbance of mind the huge bill of costs which is being laid upon the ratepayer for the provision of the necessary accommodation. So exacting have become the demands of the Lunacy Commissioners in relation to the construction, furnishing, and maintenance of asylums, that one anxiously wonders when a limit is likely to be reached, and some bounds placed to the exorbitant calls upon the public purse. I saw somewhere, not so very long ago, an account of the plans and estimates for a projected asylum. The cost came out at £440 a bed, and a staff of 300 persons were to be detailed to the care of 500 inmates. I should not for one moment be disposed to speak of economy, if I believed that such outlays as I have instanced were necessary ; but as it is likely that we shall have to deal with many extensions of existing institutions, this question of cost must more and more become a matter of importance. What I am more particularly anxious to put forward is, that the present is a convenient time for reviewing the whole question of how best to provide for the insane, and of reducing to something like order an apparent chaos of procedure. Are we to allow our asylums to go on increasing in size, and becoming more and more unwieldy in their proportions? Are we to allow one course of action in one Union and a different elsewhere? Are we to allow the removal of all cases to the county asylum in one case, and tolerate the reverse in another? Speaking purely as a student of the principles of local administration, I must confess that for a system so lax and so inexact I see no justification, but that, on the other hand, I can see the advantage of uniformity of action, and suggest the present as a fitting time for the consideration of our

existing system or systems. At the present moment it has broken down before a rush which may or may not be more or less temporary; would it not be well, therefore, to review the whole position, embracing every aspect and every interest, and seriously consider if it be possible to simplify the present procedure? As the law stands, the duty of providing asylum accommodation devolves upon the Council of every administrative County or County-Borough constituted under the Local Government Act of 1888. The Act provides for the reception into Workhouses of chronic lunatics (not very dangerous), and it is abundantly evident that only such cases are considered as fit to be thus accommodated. We note that under Section 241 of the Lunacy Act 1890, the authority may provide asylum accommodation for pauper patients and private patients together or in separate asylums, and may provide separate asylums for idiots or patients suffering from any particular class of mental disorder. This last clause is important; and bearing it in mind, let us consider how far it would be expedient to avail ourselves of this provision.

It has been said that at any rate so far as the Poor Law is concerned classification is the order of the day. At a time, therefore, when classification is becoming more and more a reality and less an ideal, is it possible to adopt some system of classification which might do something to simplify our problem of the treatment of the insane? Classification is never under any circumstances an easy matter, and to attempt to classify cases of insanity with a view to certain modifications of treatment is an exceedingly difficult undertaking. From a purely administrative point of view, we are accustomed to speak in a loose way of "chronic" or "harmless" cases, as opposed to "dangerous" lunatics. Even if it were possible to draw such a sharp line of distinction, it would be of little value as an indication of the line of treatment to be adopted. The question

of restraint is not the only one that must arise in the treatment of lunacy ; and it is impossible to broadly divide these cases into those who require careful supervision and restraint, and those to whom greater freedom may be allowed. The attempt to establish such a broad distinction has led to many regrettable episodes, and cannot too strongly be discouraged.

The only broad basis of classification that can be maintained, is the separation of cases of congenital idiocy and imbecility from those who once in possession of their faculties have had the misfortune to lose them. Separate establishments for the treatment of the former are particularly desirable. A very large number are now confined in our workhouses, where no attempt is made at training, and where further mental deterioration is alone possible. Many too are confined in the wards of our lunatic asylums. This is a distinct disadvantage in two ways. They themselves are bewildered and frightened by the acute maniacal, and they also imitate the bad habits of the lunatics with whom they are associated. On the other hand, their presence has an undoubtedly bad influence on the curable cases of lunacy.

In order to provide for these cases separate establishments are required, distinct altogether from the existing asylums. The more densely populated counties would probably have sufficient cases to warrant the erection of separate buildings, in other cases two or three counties might combine together and erect a suitable asylum. It is urged that, apart from the question of treatment, there would be a saving in the case of an asylum for imbeciles and idiots only, in two directions :—1. in the construction, fewer single rooms being required ; and 2. in the matter of attendance. Dr Elliot, the Medical Superintendent of Caterham Asylum, estimates this at from one shilling and sixpence to two shillings a week per inmate.

The treatment of these cases is a matter of supreme importance. Much may be done to improve their bodily condition, to strengthen their frame, and alleviate its defects. As has been remarked, the "automatic movements due to the want of the controlling power of the will must be replaced by others upon certain definite plans. Then, too, the muscular system being strengthened, the hands have no difficulty in performing simple acts, and locomotion is improved, dribbling from the mouth disappears, the eyes wander less restlessly, and the listlessness and to a great extent the inertness disappear. The moral treatment goes on side by side with the physical and mental treatment. Obedience must be taught and efforts made to impart good temper and affection. The child has to learn these good qualities through the agency of its teachers and attendants, who have to use every effort to improve the moral qualities of those confided to their care." The intellectual training is of considerable difficulty, and begins with the education of the senses. The sense of touch must be evoked by a variety of exercises, by threading beads, by building with bricks, by fitting variously shaped pieces of wood into corresponding depressions, and a host of others. Then the sense of sight must be educated, in colour, in form, in dimension and distance. The sense of hearing in turn must be exercised by various sounds and with the aid of music. The senses of taste and smell must be similarly dealt with. All these exercises must be carefully graduated, from the simple we must proceed to the complex, and then too from these we must step by step proceed to the higher branches of learning. The rudiments of education may be imparted, and instruction in various forms of work will prove useful. Then, by no means least in the scale, varied amusements are necessary to break the monotony and vary the mental strain.

Such, within the limits of our time, are the leading

features of the training we should endeavour to impart. Surrounded by grave difficulties and requiring infinite patience on the part of the instructor, we must never forget that the capacity to develop the moral and intellectual faculties does not exist beyond a certain point. Some have sought to arrange these patients according to their ability to receive instruction, but such a division is practically without value. Each case must be judged by itself. Whatever classification may be found possible within the walls of an institution such as we have suggested, the point we wish to drive home is that these classes can only be satisfactorily dealt with in a special asylum, and under definite systematic training. And when these institutions are provided, we must take care that other types are excluded, and that the distinctive character of these asylums shall be maintained. This has not been done in many of the existing institutions.

Having thus separated these classes from the cases of lunacy proper, there remains the question of how far any system of further classification is possible. It is impossible, we believe, to lay down any basis which shall be wholly free from objection. Every case must be treated on its merits, and only careful study and observation of each individual case will enable us to define the line of treatment to be adopted. Acting on these lines, more particularly in asylums built on the pavilion system, a certain amount of classification might be adopted, which would probably tend to reduce the cost, at least in the two directions we have mentioned in our consideration of the previous classes.

In the treatment of epileptics some classification is required. Those who are insane or imbecile must certainly be treated in asylums, but exception might be made in the case of those who are sane. The effect on their mental condition would be disastrous if confined with those who are insane, and it has been suggested that Boards of Guardians should combine to

build houses for sane pauper epileptics. For ourselves we consider the formation of colonies on the lines of the Craig Colony, New York, worthy of serious consideration. Here 1,900 acres of very fertile and highly cultivated land are tilled by these unfortunate persons, under the direction of a superintendent, who is a medical man. The experiment has been tried elsewhere, and the results are, we believe, very satisfactory. Whatever line of treatment is adopted, we cannot too strongly urge:—1st. The retention in asylums of all epileptics, save those whose mental condition is unimpaired; and 2nd. That provision of the nature I have suggested should be made.

This brings us to the consideration of those cases we are accustomed to term “chronic,” and how far the full asylum treatment is required in their case. It is well to remember that many of these so-called chronic cases are curable; some authorities have had successful results in ten per cent. of these cases. We must be careful not to deny to any of these unfortunate people the chance of recovery, however slender, and this cannot be done without careful observation in the wards of an asylum. And having eliminated these, there is still left that large body of cases, in a state of unsoundness of mind but quite harmless, never requiring the restraint of an asylum. These chronic cases of mania and dementia require nevertheless careful watching and nursing, being frequently in a state of second childhood, like children or even infants in uncleanness, and utterly unfit to take care of themselves. They are perfectly manageable without the appliances of an asylum, but require constant and watchful care. The question arises, should these cases be retained in our Workhouses? After the careful elimination in an asylum which we have suggested, and in cases where there can be no doubt as to their general condition, there is no reason why they should not be treated in our Workhouses. Many

Unions have provided the necessary accomodation and supply all that is needed, both in the matter of the wards and the attendance. In small Unions, however, it may not be possible to provide so satisfactorily for these cases, and a considerable difficulty is here introduced. We have every reason to believe that a very considerable saving would result from the adoption of this course. There are other minor considerations which might be urged in support of this view, but we believe that, given efficiency, economy must certainly be held in mind. Institutional care is certainly to be preferred in these cases to any system of boarding-out, as adopted in certain districts, even though a certain amount of success is claimed.

There is one point to which I would like to refer very briefly. That is the want of asylum accommodation for patients whose relatives could afford to pay for them as private patients at a low rate, but who, owing to the want of such accommodation, are now admitted as paupers. Some county asylums have made this provision, and have made a profit on the undertaking. I believe Cumberland and Westmorland have done so with very satisfactory results.

Dr Elkins, Medical Superintendent of Sunderland Borough Asylum, in his last report instances a case which illustrates this point most forcibly. A father sent his son as a private patient to Durham County Asylum, but when it became full he was removed to Newcastle Asylum, which in its turn became full, and the patient took shelter in Sunderland Asylum. Once again notice was given to the father to remove the patient, who is now a pauper patient at Durham County Asylum, presumably because there is no available asylum accommodation for such patients in the neighbourhood. The wanderings of this poor lad are eloquent testimony to the serious nature of the present breakdown of our system.

I have endeavoured to place before you some of

the considerations which must form the basis of your discussion. Some of you, with wider experience in these questions, may be able to supplement many points I may have overlooked, or extend others which I may have treated only superficially. As I have already remarked, the question is becoming increasingly urgent, and the complete consideration of all its aspects cannot be long delayed. My desire above all is, that this shall not be done in any sectional manner, but that the whole treatment of these unfortunate people may be reviewed. By so doing, I believe that not only will the interests of the patients be most satisfactorily safeguarded, but also those of the ratepayers on whom the burden of cost must fall.

DISCUSSION.

The Rev. A. F. CURWEN said the paper was one of the most valuable he had ever heard. It came home very strongly to him, as he had been endeavouring for months to induce the Guardians of Cumberland to build an imbecile asylum. If they sent patients to Garland, they were drafted back in a few weeks because the asylum was so full, and in a few weeks they were as mad as ever. In his Workhouse there were thirty-three imbeciles, and the Guardians were nearly all in favour of removing them. They could not be treated as they ought to be. He would like to ask whether if the Guardians built an asylum they would get the four-shilling grant?

Mr DAWSON (Local Government Inspector) said he had not the necessary information to allow him to give an answer. It seemed to him that a separate asylum would be providing for imbeciles in a proper way and at a much cheaper rate.

Mr CAREY (Cockermouth) said they ought to try to get the four-shilling grant. The lunatic asylums were gradually becoming so full that something would have to be done.

Mr MURRAY (Cockermouth) moved a vote of thanks to Dr Bowmaker.

Mr ARCHBOLD (South Shields) hoped that the Local Government Board would see their way to make an allowance to every Board which made special provision for imbeciles. He seconded the vote of thanks.

Mr BRANTINGHAM (Sunderland) suggested that the Conference should communicate with the Boards of Guardians in the district, and ascertain whether they, or any of them, would combine to provide

special accommodation for congenital idiots, affording them good treatment, and relieving the pressure on the lunatic asylums. The cost of lunatic asylum accommodation was steadily rising, and the time had come when something must be done.

Mr BOSANQUET said that recently, when he visited the large asylum at Caterham, Surrey, the superintendent told him there was no use in trying to combine harmless lunatics and congenital idiots. These were quite a distinct class from the former, whose misfortune it had been to lose faculties they had once possessed.

The Rev. A. F. CURWEN moved that it is desirable in the interests both of the imbecile inmates of the Workhouses and also of the ratepayers that imbecile asylums should be established in suitable centres, and that the four-shilling grant should be allowed for asylums for congenital idiots.

Mr CAREY seconded the resolution, and it was carried *nem. con.*

The PRESIDENT expressed a fear that the requirements of the Lunacy Commissioners would go far to balance the four-shilling grant.

Dr BOWMAKER said that if the local authorities throughout the country were unanimous their wishes would be met in the matter of separate asylums.

The Rev. Mr CURWEN proposed, and Mr BRANTINGHAM seconded, a vote of thanks to the President. This was carried with acclamation.

Mr CROPPER, replying, mentioned that this was the twenty-fifth meeting, and the gradual progress of the Conference had been very striking and very gratifying.

Mr HODGSON (Sunderland) moved a vote of thanks to the Hon. Secretary. This was carried with cordiality, and the proceedings terminated.

South-Western District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

FIRST OF THE NEW SERIES OF POOR LAW CON-
FERENCES FOR THE COUNTIES OF CORNWALL,
DEVON, DORSET, SOMERSET, AND WILTSHIRE,
HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, BATH, ON MONDAY
AND TUESDAY, 19TH AND 20TH JULY 1897.

LORD EDMOND FITZMAURICE, *Chairman of the Wilts
County Council*, PRESIDING.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference.

* Guardians specially delegated by their Boards.

CORNWALL (13 Unions).

ST AUSTEIL—

*Purcell, Rev. H. N. (Chairman).

*Nicholls, W. J.

*Knight, J.

TRURO—

*Moor, Mrs Eliza.

FALMOUTH—

Stirling, Miss Julia.

DEVON (20 Unions).

EXETER—

*Chorley, Mrs.

*Munro, H. T.

NEWTON-ABBOT—

Baker, Mrs R.

Divett, Miss Mary E.

DEVON—*continued.*

TIVERTON—

*Wyndham, Mrs Ellen.

Desler, W.

HONITON—

*Toogood, George.

ST THOMAS—

*Hamilton, A. H. A. (Chairman).

*Daw, Mrs.

DORSET (12 Unions).

CERNE—

*Palairret, H. H. (Chairman).

DORCHESTER—

*Middleton, H. B. (Chairman).

*Dennis, G. J.

DORSET—*continued*.

WIMBORNE AND CRANBORNE—

*Homer, J. (Chairman).

*Ford, H.

Cartwright, Captain.

SHAFTESBURY—

*Mullins, E. N. (Chairman).

*Scammell, S.

SOMERSET (17 Unions).

BATH—

Carr, Thomas (Chairman).

*Serle, J. H.

*Shackell, R.

Blackiston, A.

English, Miss Ellen.

Cochrane, Alexander.

Hanham, Alfred.

Edgcumbe, Miss E.

Schickle, Rev. C. W.

King, Austin J., F.S.A.

Manship, William.

Stiles, E.

Cobb, J.

Pearson, Miss.

Mannings, J. (Clerk).

FROME—

*Oatey, J. (Chairman).

*Brooking, Mrs.

*Ames, Mrs.

Hood, R.

Wright,

Silcocks, E.

Batty, J.

WINCANTON—

*Bailward, T. H. M.

*Mackie, J.

*Moore, F. S.

BEDMINSTER—

*Weatherly, E. (Chairman).

*Morehouse, H. J.

*Button, E.

Peddler, Miss S. J.

Harding, S.

Fry, Miss.

BRIDGWATER—

Anderson, Rev. E. G.

CLUTTON—

*Gibbons, G. (Vice-Chairman).

*Thatcher, J.

*Dury, J. S. (Clerk).

WELLINGTON—

*Sanford, Colonel (Chairman).

*Davey, J.

*Pryce, S. (Clerk).

SOMERSET—*continued*.

WELLS—

*Keen, J. R. (Chairman).

*Bowring, E.

Slade, G.

*Russ, G. (Clerk).

YEOVIL—

*Harbin, Colonel Henry E.

WILTS (17 Unions).

BRADFORD-ON-AVON—

*Beavon, Mrs.

*Parsons, Mrs.

CRICKLADE AND WOTTON BASSET—

Martin, Mrs Wykeham.

CHIPPENHAM—

Clutterbuck, E. H. (Chairman).

*Johnson, Rev. J. A.

*Rooke, A. B.

*Bardwell, H. B.

Fuller, Mrs.

May, H. T.

Fuller, G. B.

James, H. J.

HIGHWORTH AND SWINDON—

*Matthews, Mrs.

*Ragget, H.

*Jones, E.

PEWSEY—

*Rogers, F. Newham.

*Rogers, Mrs.

TISBURY—

*Jeffrey, J. (Chairman).

*Alford, John (Vice-Chairman).

*Homan, Rev. F.

Chapman, Miss F. M.

CALNE—

*Ferris, T. M. (Chairman).

*Smith, F. (Vice-Chairman).

*Hillier, Mrs.

*Haddon, Rev. G. R.

*Walker, Rev. R.

DEVIZES—

*Butler, D. W. (Chairman).

*Mitchell, J. (Vice-Chairman).

*Robbins, W.

MELKSHAM—

*Blake, J. H. (Vice-Chairman).

*Stratton, Miss Maria.

*Bell, W. H.

WILTS—*continued.*

MERE—

*Rutter, Miss.

*Baker, T. H. (Chairman).

WARMINSTER—

*Morgan, F. (Chairman).

Pelly, Lady Blanche.

WILTS—*continued.*

SALISBURY—

Hammick, W.

WILTON—

*Macdonald, Rev. F. W.

*Duckles, W.

*Wilson, G. (Clerk).

VISITORS.

Murray-Browne, T. L.	} Local Government Board Inspectors.
Preston Thomas, H.	
Fleming Baldwyn,	
Wethered, G. B., J.P.	
Chance, W. (Hon. Sec.)	} Central Poor Law Conference.
Willink, H. G.	
Bousfield, W.	} Hon. Sec., West Midland Poor Law Conference.
Clifford, Miss	
Baker Lloyd, G. E.,	} Chairman, Wilts County Infirmary.
West Midland Poor Law Conference.	
Buckley, Alfred,	
Chapman, Isaac,	Trowbridge.

Clutterbuck, Mrs, Hardenhuish Park, Chippenham.	} Delegates from Wilts Women Poor Law Association.
Jeffrey, Mrs J., Tisbury.	
Nicholls, Mrs Walter, St Austell, Cornwall.	
Skrine, Colonel H., Warleigh, Bath.	
Pelly, Lady Blanche	
Barnard, Mrs	
Bickle, Mrs	
Newman Rogers, Mrs	
Napier, Miss	
Martin, Mrs, Wykeman	
Sharland, Miss	
Appleton, James, Chorlton Union, Manchester.	

The following Unions were not represented either by Delegates or other Guardians :—

CORNWALL.—Bodmin, Camelford, Columb St Major, St Germans, Helston, Launceston, Liskeard, Penzance, Redruth, Stratton.

DEVON.—Axminster, Barnstaple, Bideford, Crediton, East Stonehouse, Holsworthy, Kingsbridge, Oakhampton, Plymouth, Plympton St Mary, South Molton, Stoke-Damerel, Tavistock, Torrington, Totnes.

DORSET.—Beaminster, Blandford, Bridport, Poole, Sherborne, Sturminster, Wareham and Purbeck, Weymouth.

SOMERSET.—Axbridge, Chard, Dulverton, Keynsham, Longport, Shepton Mallet, Taunton, Williton.

WILTS.—Amesbury, Malmesbury, Marlborough, Westbury and Whorwells-Down.

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MONDAY, 19TH JULY.

The Mayor of Bath, Mr G. Woodiwiss, was to have welcomed the Delegates to the city, but owing to the death of his mother he was unfortunately prevented from being present.

Alderman RUBIE (ex-Mayor) said they would all sympathise with the Mayor in his sad bereavement. No man considered the interests of the poor more than the present Mayor of Bath. Judging from the work done by the Guardians in Bath, they deserved the thanks alike of the ratepayers and the poor.

Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice then took the chair.

Miss FLORENCE M. CHAPMAN, Donhead House, Salisbury, the Hon. Secretary, stated that she had received apologies for absence from Mr Albert Pell, Mr Wyndham Portal, Miss Mason, and Sir John T. Hibbert.

The PRESIDENT said that the first thing he must do was to express great regret at the cause which prevented the Mayor of Bath from being present. It was some time since a Conference from the South-Western Counties was held—one at Exeter ten years ago, in fact, being the last. Since then no attempt had been made in that respect, and there was no doubt they had lagged behind other Poor Law districts of England. Considering it to be their wish that they should meet more frequently in the future, if not actually annually, it was necessary they should constitute themselves. They were all very grateful indeed to Miss Chapman for the trouble she had taken for her work in the arduous position of Hon. Secretary, and he used the word arduous advisedly.

Mr E. H. CLUTTERBUCK said that he had had something to do with the arrangements for the Conference, and he had seen the immense amount of work which had been done by Miss Chapman, and the zeal with which she had entered into her duties. He moved that the Conference invite Miss Chapman to act as Hon. Secretary for the ensuing year.

This was carried with acclamation.

Miss CHAPMAN said she had great pleasure in accepting the position. (Cheers.)

Lord EDMOND FITZMAURICE said that to a certain extent he might begin by asking himself why he was called upon to occupy the chair on that occasion, for he was not a Poor Law Guardian. Perhaps it was because of that fact, and the presumption that he would look at the various subjects impartially, or perhaps it was because he was formerly a Poor Law Guardian. But whatever the reason, he thanked them for the compliment. South-Western Poor Law Conferences had fallen into abeyance for a great many years, and the work of restoration had been one of great labour, but he hoped that the result would be that the Conference would be a permanent and, if possible, an annual event in future. Poor Law Conferences had

done very much to introduce uniformity of administration, and to excite interest in Poor Law work generally. The work of the Poor Law Guardian was a most important one, and one which tended to extend itself. The Guardian had, under the Local Government Act, other duties as District Councillor to perform whether he liked it or not. It was a view which he did as much as he could to impress upon the public when he was a member of Parliament, that there were too many local authorities, and that energy was frittered away by subdivision. He was the other day looking at that very interesting book on the English Poor Law by Professor Aschrott, to which Professor Sidgwick supplied a valuable preface. The German Professor expressed the opinion that 1871, when Mr Goschen was at the Local Government Board, was one of the most important dates in the history of the Poor Law, for the idea was then accepted that the poor might be benefited by many things besides relief, such as education and many things that affected the individual long before in any case he would be likely to want relief. The movement was directed to the removal of the cause of poverty, and it had rendered the work of the Poor Law Guardian at once wider and more interesting. He happened at that moment to recall an interesting observation on another matter, the duty of a Chairman. Lord Rosebery once remarked that "the first duty of a Chairman is to get into the chair, and sit in it." (Cheers and laughter.)

Mr AUSTIN J. KING (Guardian of Bath Union) read the following paper :—

POWERS OF POOR LAW GUARDIANS OF DEALING WITH CHILDREN.

BY MR AUSTIN J. KING, F.S.A.,

Guardian of the Poor, Bath.

WE have two enemies to contend with in dealing with Poor Law children, namely, Philanthropy and Bumbledom.

When we see children brought into the Workhouse, showing by their rags and filth and their emaciated frames the brutal neglect of their parents, and with sores and bruises speaking eloquently of their still more brutal ill-treatment, when we see helpless infants born of vice within the depressing circuit of the Workhouse walls, we are inclined to think that we cannot be too lavish in making up to these poor little mites for their sufferings and misfortune.

But the administration of the Poor Law is not, and ought not to be, a matter of Philanthropy. We may be generous with our money; we must be just with the money of the ratepayers.

Justice must make us sensible that there are many ratepayers paying scot and lot, who have less money passing through their hands than some paupers, and that it is only by hard and unremitting toil from morning until night, and frugalities and economies which it makes us shudder to contemplate, that they manage to live and bring up their families. It is *hard* that such people should have to contribute towards the support of the offspring of their idle and improvident neighbours. It is *unjust* that those contributions should exceed what the circumstances imperatively demand.

The common weal requires that the children of the idle shall be fed and clothed and educated, just as it calls for a still larger expense over gaols and convict prisons; but this public necessity is the only justification of the employment of public funds.

The first necessity is therefore that there should be no extravagance, and one cannot view with equanimity arrangements which entail upon the ratepayers 12s., 15s., and even 16s. per week for each pauper child. Even if these large sums benefited the children I should object to them as unfair.

But so far from this, I think that lavish surroundings are actually injurious to children whose lot it will be to earn their bread in a rough environment.

It is not so long ago since Fawcett denounced boarding-out of pauper children, not on the ground of expense, for this he admitted to be reasonable, but because it tended to give such advantages to them as to make their position and prospects better than those of ratepayers' children, and was therefore a direct discouragement of thrift.

I venture to think that such an argument would not

be used at the present day. I venture to hope that we all regard it as a sound principle of political economy that it is the duty of Poor Law Guardians to do all they can to fit the children under their care to become good citizens. We can never indeed hope to do as well for our children as good, hard-working, thrifty, and religious parents, but we certainly cannot in these days be expected to emulate those who are idle and neglectful. Poor little Workhouse waifs! there is no reason for making them carry weight in the race.

But I do not think that Philanthropy is the enemy which most of our Boards of Guardians have seriously to contend with. Bumbledom is a more serious foe. I should define Bumbledom as the spirit which would disregard everything but the rates, a spirit which would, so long as children are not starved, so long as a Local Government Board Inspector does not get very rampant about the state of their heads (I mean, of course, the outside), the Guardians are under no responsibility and need have no care.

We are some of us sometimes too apt to shelter ourselves behind our subordinates. Neither Workhouse masters or matrons, nor chaplains or schoolmasters, nor all combined are the Guardians of Poor Law children. We are in fact as well as name, in right as in responsibility, the "Guardians." The others are but our servants or deputies. The distinction is important to my argument, because the best means theoretically of housing and maintaining and bringing up the children become in practice the worst, unless the men and women on our Boards will themselves attend personally to duties which are far too often relegated.

I have not time to go into any history of that sad chapter of the early working of the Poor Law. But since 1834, or thereabouts, a general custom has been to keep the children in the Workhouses. In theory they were kept apart from the adult paupers; in

practice they frequently met them, and were corrupted and debauched. It is a curious and sad experience that adult paupers, both male and female, often show a fiendish delight in corrupting and debasing youth. This evil became so manifest that Poor Law and District Schools—Barrack Schools as they are now commonly called—were instituted. They were better buildings and more comfortable, and they presented the great advantage of the absence of adult paupers. The other conditions were for the most part those of a Workhouse. Long before the Report of the Departmental Committee on Poor Law Schools, which has caused a fluttering and a searching of hearts, it became evident that children could no more be crowded together and do well than poultry. Low vital tone, ophthalmia, and other institution plagues became common. The repression of the natural instincts of children and the attempt to force them all into cast-iron moulds of uniformity were neither for their moral, physical, or intellectual good.

As regards Workhouse life for children, there are not, I think, at the present day two opinions. But there are Guardians of intelligence and zeal who think that Barrack Schools will, in some large urban Unions, remain a necessity for many years.

I am afraid we must admit that the Local Government Board has not been the pioneer of Poor Law improvement; but my Lords and Gentlemen began to sanction little settlements for children on the plan of a small village. The Marston Green Cottage Homes were, I believe, the first, and these have now a record of experience of some sixteen years. There is a more modern sample at Pontypridd, and several others have been started. The houses are like semi-detached villas with small gardens. The Marston Green Homes were built to hold thirty children in each Home, but it is now recognised that fifteen is a better number. There is a residence for the master and matron, a

school and convenient playgrounds, laundry, store-room, &c.

I wish to speak with the greatest respect of this system, which I think has received rather rough usage in the Report of the Departmental Committee. It affords many and great advantages over institution life. The children are split up into groups sufficiently small to give each child a feeling of separate existence and power of mental expansion. The food is more varied and home-like, and there is an absence of any corrupting influence.

The practical success of the Marston Green Committee in bringing up the children has been considerable, and the system can be carried out at a cost per head, including establishment charges, of about 8s. per week.

The disadvantages appear to be—(1) The isolation of the children from those of the non-pauper class; (2) the education in Poor Law instead of Public Elementary Schools, and in some cases, at all events, the teachers being with the children permanently, and not merely at lesson time; (3) the distance such Homes usually are from town, and the consequent impossibility of sending those of different creeds to their own distinctive places of worship. In one word, the children are brought up well, but as paupers.

There remain two systems still to be considered, which I venture to put forward as the best, namely, boarding-out, and the scattered or isolated Home system.

I say that I regard these as the best, but this assumes the personal and continuous personal supervision of male and female Guardians, especially the latter. Official supervision is needed, and should never be omitted, but I am satisfied that it is not of itself sufficient.

The success of boarding-out depends mainly upon the choice of suitable homes, not always easy to find. Great scandals have before now thrown discredit on a

system which was really deserved by the neglect of the precautions by which it should be hedged round. But if the families are good, and the supervision a real one, the results are excellent. To board out children in foreign Unions, under the care of a supervising Committee, is more dangerous, because effective personal supervision is less easy, but I am without experience of this.

In the Bath Union the Guardians board out orphan and deserted children practically without exception. The boarded-out children form part of the family, and their clothing, cleanliness, and health attest the success of the scheme. Within the last few months a foster-mother went to live outside the Union, and rather than part with the child offered to adopt it permanently as her own.

Life in a good family, apart from all Workhouse and pauper surroundings, and intermixture with non-pauper companions, are the very best means of training out the pauper taint.

Boarding-out is only permitted as regards orphan and deserted children, and under no conditions could the system have universal application. But I should welcome an increased discretionary power being vested in the Guardians. There are some children who are neither orphan nor deserted for whom boarding-out would be very suitable.

The cost of boarding-out, 4s. per week, and 10s. a quarter for clothes, is moderate, and compares favourably with other systems.

But for the present, at all events, all children cannot be boarded out. What are we to do with the remainder?

Just as boarding-out is an approximation towards family life, so is the scattered Home system an approximation towards boarding-out. But just as boarding-out would, if supervision be lax, degenerate into child farming, so may defective management degrade the

scattered Home system into such an establishment as Dickens describes in "Oliver Twist."

Here, says the novelist, "Oliver Twist, with twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the Poor Law, rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing, under the parental superintendence of an elderly female, who received the culprits at, and for the consideration of, $7\frac{1}{2}$ d. per small head per week."

In Bath we have tried not to follow this famous exemplar. We have five houses in different parts of the town rented by the Guardians at an average of £25 per annum. Each Home contains a foster-mother and not more than fifteen children. There is a Superintendent, who with his wife acts as manager and visitor, and two members of the Committee visit each Home separately once a week.

One Home is for boys over ten. In the others, girls and younger boys live together. The children and the foster-mother do the house work, cleaning, and mending, but not the washing. The children attend the Public Elementary Schools, and go to church or chapel and Sunday school according to their creed. All the arrangements are of the simplest and plainest. The diet is on much the same scale as at the Workhouse so far as regards cost; but the food is more varied, and served with more nicety and care. There are no rations. The foster-mother has a maximum dietary, about a third more than she ever needs, and to this limit she orders what is needed. The children have as much as they like, and, unlike Oliver Twist, are allowed "to ask for more." This is found to be more economical, because less wasteful than the ration system.

The cost is very moderate, 3s. $0\frac{1}{2}$ d. maintenance and 2s. $9\frac{3}{4}$ d. establishment charges, a total of 5s. $10\frac{1}{4}$ d. per week. This includes every expense. All the

furniture and other properties were purchased without any loan.

The system has not been at work long enough to make it possible to speak of it as a success, but it appears to work in a most satisfactory manner.

In its main features the system is that first introduced at Sheffield. But we did not in Bath go to the expense of a Central Headquarters building. A part of the Workhouse is made to answer as a Receiving and Discharging Ward, and children are in case of necessity sent to the Workhouse Infirmary. The health of the children has been excellent, and there has been no ophthalmia.

I forbear to inflict upon you further details of management, but I shall be pleased to answer any questions.

There are many questions which deserve, and at such a Conference as this will certainly receive, attention as to the management of the children in Poor Law Institutions. All systems which resolve masses of children into units will necessarily bring out peculiarities which are not apparent in the masses themselves. And perhaps one of the greatest advantages of these outside systems is that it forces Guardians to differentiate treatment. Hence the growing necessity, or rather perhaps the shining forth of a necessity which has always existed, of providing for weak-minded, crippled, deaf, and other children, unable to hold their own.

Undoubtedly also these systems lead us into trouble with parents (or to correct myself again) enable parents to be a trouble to us. When a parent wants a spree he or she or they give notice, and take their discharge. If the children were in the Workhouse, they could easily be discharged with them. But to bring up the children from the Cottage Homes to the Workhouse, and return them their own rags, and so let them out, is a troublesome business, and even

more sad than troublesome. We know that the children will be kept away for two or three days, that their schooling will be interrupted, and that they will be taken to places and see things and hear words most injurious to them.

What is the remedy? I do not think it is hard to find. There is no reason why idle and vicious men and women should be allowed to make the Workhouse an hotel or a sanatorium where they may recover themselves from drinking bouts. The Guardians should have power by resolution to prohibit any pauper leaving the house for a period of say six months who has taken his discharge and returned after a shorter interval than two months. Of course the Guardians would not exercise this where a discharge was taken in the *bona fide* attempt to get work. In practice there would be no difficulty. Every Board of Guardians knows well its own specimens of that most undesirable genus "Ins-and-Outs."

One of the great advantages claimed by the Managers of the Marston Green and other Homes on the village system is the industrial or technical training they provide. That system lends itself to training of this kind better than either boarding-out or Homes on the scattered system. But the real difficulty is one of time. If children attend school regularly both morning and afternoon, and attend to such domestic matters as ordinarily fall upon children of the labouring classes, eating, sleeping, and necessary recreation will well account for the balance of their time. I do not believe in half-time schooling — it usually means no schooling at all; and it is far more important to get a sound elementary education than to play at bootmaking or carpentering or baking.

The serious learning of a trade commences at fourteen or fifteen. Boys can properly be sent out to work at fourteen. I believe it to be better for them and for the ratepayers that they should be.

The case of girls is different. They do better if kept in the Homes until at all events fifteen, and there is no reason why that last year, when compulsory attendance at school has ceased, should not be utilised in teaching them at technical classes or otherwise dressmaking, cooking, and laundry work. Even young girls can also learn sewing, knitting, and house work.

The giving up of Workhouse Bands is sometimes mentioned as a misfortune. I have never heard this so mentioned by any inmate of the House, but so far as the boys themselves are concerned the employment was no doubt beneficial. But there is no reason why boys with a taste for music should not join local school or other bands like other boys of the place, and identify themselves with the general life.

You will be struck by the many subjects of consideration which I am leaving out, as much perhaps at the number of those which I have with seeming recklessness of your fatigue crowded in. But Miss Clifford, who is to follow me, will deal with many of these from the standpoint of her great experience.

But one word in conclusion. If we would make our Poor Law boys and girls outgrow the taint of pauperism, we must treat them just as we should treat those who have not the taint. Teach them to be self-reliant and independent, show them that we regard them as human beings and not merely as statistics, and we may have hope for their future. But we must not expect too much. Heredity will claim its victims. Early associations and bad example are strong enemies to fight against. But the greater the need, the greater the danger, the more difficult the task, so much the more must it be our duty to discharge with zeal this, our most important function as Guardians, "the helping of those who cannot help themselves."

Miss CLIFFORD (Guardian of the Barton Regis Union) read the following paper :—

POWERS OF DEALING WITH CHILDREN OF ALL CLASSES, BUT SPECIALLY FEEBLE - MINDED CHILDREN, AND “INS AND OUTS.”

By Miss CLIFFORD,
Guardian of the Poor, Barton Regis.

WE are this afternoon to consider the powers granted to Guardians for dealing with the various classes of children committed to their care. The previous paper shows very clearly how wide these powers are. Probably no public body exists that has better means of doing the work committed to it than a Board of Poor Law Guardians. They have the rates for a treasury ; they have a central authority which insists on their doing well what they undertake ; and they have a very exacting public—a public which not only pays the bills, but which is at present inclined to be seriously displeased with Guardians who either neglect or oppress the once despised parish child.

We have seen in Mr King's interesting paper that we have only to review the various systems of education, carefully to choose the best and put it into operation. Law and public opinion will be with us. All we are asked to do is so to educate the pauper's child that it may never become a pauper. The matter seems simply one of good and wise administration. In fact, Poor Law School work looks at the first glance about the most manageable bit of social service to be found—funds provided, material to hand, experience, powers, machinery all there. But on the further side rises a sudden barrier—a barrier which cuts short the authority of the Guardians with regard to at least two-thirds of

the children under their charge. The barrier is, of course, the authority of the parent. The common law of England recognises the responsibility and the duty of the parent, and it gives him a control only limited by his keeping clear of crime. This is as it ought to be. In all social effort the sacred claims of fatherhood and motherhood should be nourished and strengthened to the utmost.

There are, however, in the Poor Law two exceptional cases where the power of the parent to control the child may be taken away. Eight years ago authority was given to Guardians to adopt, by a resolution of the Board, two classes of children—deserted children, and children whose parents had criminally ill-used them. This Act has been widely used, and Boards of Guardians have thus put themselves into the position of parents to a considerable number of children. My own Board has adopted 172 children (58 in consequence of cruelty and 114 in consequence of desertion) since 1889, when the Act was passed.

I want you to examine the principle of this Act. It applies only to parents who have, by ignoring their duties, forfeited their privileges. The parent who, by long-continued criminal neglect or repeated cruelty, has deliberately denied his responsibility, is sent to prison by the Magistrates, and the Guardians are given authority to assume his powers of control in order that they may perform the duty he has left undone. In the same way the parent who has deserted his family is held to have abdicated his right to be the head of it. If he throws them upon the public to be maintained, the public may appoint trustees, *i.e.*, the Guardians, to see that necessary means are taken to bring the children up properly. But in both these cases the Act provides that as soon as possible the parent shall pay for the maintenance of the child. If aggrieved, he may appeal to the Police Court, and the resolution may at any time be rescinded by the Board of Guardians.

This legislation is permissive, and it is intended to be not only protective for the children, but deterrent as regards cruelty and desertion. That this is really the case is the opinion of the paid officer of the Bristol Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. "I think," he said, "the system of adopting children who have been neglected deters other parents. As for encouraging cruelty, it is quite the reverse."

We have not found that desertion has been increased—on the 3rd of June the number of deserted children chargeable in the Workhouse was only forty-one, half the number we had ten years ago before this Act was passed.

The provisions of the Act are on the same lines as those of the Industrial Schools Act, but Guardians have means of carrying out the deterrent conditions more effectually than other authorities seem to have. In the first place, they can enforce payment better. It is both humiliating and unpleasant to a man to pay for a child whom he may not control. He gets very tired of doing it, and his neighbours and fellow workmen do not regard him favourably. Even more unenviable is the position of the parent who not only has to pay, but who does not know where the Guardians have placed his children. It is a great disgrace, even in a very low slum, to have forfeited your child, and not to know where he is. You may have starved and kicked him, you may have left him alone locked up in the dark and the cold, or you may have deserted your motherless girls and let a neighbour bring them to the Workhouse, but none of these things need weigh heavily if you know where and how they are being maintained. That is the public opinion of the very lowest class of society. Guardians can board out these children in distant places unknown to the relatives, or place them in Industrial Training Homes in other neighbourhoods, and if the power to emigrate elder children, who wished it, without the consent of the

parent were added, the effect would be distinctly to prevent both desertion and cruelty. Power to emigrate under these circumstances has been given, subject to the consent of the Home Secretary, in the recent amendment of the Act for the Protection of Children.

The defaulting parent must be made to see that he has put himself at a disadvantage. If the result of his crimes is that he is simply relieved of the maintenance of his children while he can visit them and admire their good clothes and improved ways, bring them presents, and keep in constant friendly touch with them, why, of course, he compares himself most favourably with his honest neighbours who with all their hard work can scarcely support their families.

I think you will therefore see that the purpose of adoption by the Guardians is defeated unless the children are really separated from the parent who has been declared unfit to bring them up. The parent simply congratulates himself on having his children brought up well at the cost of other people, and the children grow up with the tie unbroken of the old bad examples and habits, as long as the parent has unrestrained access to them.

We have been able in the Barton Regis Union to board out or place in Certified Homes over a third of the children. We have the great satisfaction of seeing them growing up separated from low associations and becoming welded into the honourable working class—a class which we have increasing reason to be proud of as a part of the British nation.

What about the rest of the children in our Workhouse, numbering about 200—the unadopted children? Some eighty have parents in the House—unmarried mothers, deserted mothers, invalids, ins and outs, men who can get nothing to do. The remainder have parents out of doors, chiefly widows and deserted wives.

I have here a list of the whole of the children

chargeable in the Workhouse on 3rd June, with the family circumstances noted down. It is chiefly a record of failure—failure of character; as a rule, drink, idleness, folly, sin, bring the children to our school. Socially the great majority belong to the dregs of society: the parents of most of them are the residuum, the failures, those whose friends have despaired of them. And yet as we look at the faces of the children, some as good and sweet as angels, and others with the light coming into them as their lives begin to get free from the misery of starvation and terror, we can but overflow with hope and thankfulness. Most of these children will be saved if only they have a chance of understanding practically what a Christian bringing up is. May I be allowed to add, after fifteen years' experience, that there is latent good also in nearly all the parents, if only they can be saved from themselves?

Now, over half of these children—the 200—will depend on the Guardians for all the education and training they will ever receive. First, there are the Ins-and-Outs. Here are three girls, children of a pensioner who has become quite mindless with constant drinking. His will power is gone, he feebly promises to amend, and looks helplessly at his little girls, whom he drags in and out of the Workhouse about once in three weeks. The eldest, who is eleven years old, cannot stand the excitement and the anxiety, and her mind seems to be getting quite weak and hazy. We are powerless to prevent their going in and out. This state of things has continued for several years. Then there are the children of an age for service or nearly so. Here is a boy of twelve who bravely longed to go to Canada, and escape his mother, who is a heavy drinker and a low coarse person. She very positively declined. He has been in our school six years, and any day this woman may fetch the boy out and live on his earnings. Here is a

girl of thirteen just fit for service who has been for over three years in the school. Her father took her out to a common lodging-house the other day. Will he leave her alone in her place of service? We succeeded a while ago in training and moulding into something like hopeful form a poor uncouth child, and just when the time arrived for her to be launched into life, the mother, a widow who had lost her character, claimed her, and had her home to nurse the baby. What chance was there for that girl? All of these are just typical cases.

Two cases I may mention of children of feeble mind. In one the mother point blank refused to allow us to send the child to the Star Cross Asylum, and in the other the mother removed her girl from the Training Home where she was happy, and only the other day this poor child came back to us with her baby to ask for protection from a cruel husband.

It is only fair to these children who suffer so much, and to the ratepayers who spend so much upon them, that there should be power to protect them. Working-class fathers and mothers do not grudge what is spent on these children, but it exasperates them to see idle and worthless neighbours living on public funds and selfishly ruining their children. I shall not forget conducting the women of the Co-operative Guild over our Workhouse Infant School, and the way they sat with the children on their knees, kissing them and crying over them, and longing to take them home, and give them the same chance as their own little ones.

We should like an extension of the Act of 1889 giving Guardians power to adopt, and therefore to control and protect, children who have been chargeable for a length of time. We are not attempting to deal here with the remainder who are only chargeable for a short time. I should be glad, with Mr King, to see it made possible to detain parents (as is done in Norway, for instance), and make them work and

contribute to the maintenance of their children. It would not in England be a profitable undertaking, but if it created in that lowest class of the nation a sense of parental responsibility, the ultimate gain would be of much value.

The subject of Ins-and-Outs and of Casuals is much to the fore at present, and bolder legislation is needed. Law expresses the conscience of the nation, and we want to say very plainly that a man or a woman with children must be held responsible for their growing up healthy and good, and must suffer for it if they neglect that duty. The children of an age for service have a strong claim in every way for protection. It is a very distressing thing to give up a boy or girl to a parent who is known to be immoral or a drinker or cruel, but Guardians have no alternative, and at present it is constantly being done. The principle of an Act passed in 1891, making it possible for the High Court to recognise the claim of a person who has educated a child, and to deliver the child to his legal custody, applies to these children, and makes it reasonable and consistent that the 1889 Poor Law Act should be extended to meet their case.

It is not generally known that orphans who have been brought up by Guardians and placed in service, as soon as they cease to be chargeable, cease to be under the authority of the Board. No matter how young a girl is, as soon as the Guardians leave off maintaining her, she becomes her own mistress. A girl was put to service in a house where a fellow-servant was found to be an immoral character. The Board wished to remove her, but were informed by the Local Government Board that they had no power to do so. Such cases are well known to the M.A.B.Y.S. and the G.F.S. Thus these most defenceless of human beings are at present, by what can only be regarded as an inadvertence in the law, left with no protectors whatever. A short Bill is being drafted

with the object of bringing orphans under the operation of the Poor Law Act of 1889, and when this Act passes into law I hope every Board will adopt its orphan children, thus ensuring their legal guardianship till the age in boys of sixteen, and in girls of eighteen.

The powers of Guardians for educating and protecting feeble-minded children require to be both exercised and strengthened. There is in every large Poor Law School a larger proportion than in any other schools of children of feeble brain power, more or less deficient. It is no doubt good for some of these children to mix with brighter ones, but it is very hard on the teachers to have many of them in the school. They need far more than their share of attention, and a great deal of the instruction, even in the first standard, is beyond their capacity. The time has come when Unions should combine to form special schools for the classes of children who need special care and instruction. The feeble-minded should be some of the first to be thus cared for, and the experience of such an experienced instructor as Mrs Burgwin, of the London School Board, will be invaluable to those who are intending to start such a Training Home. It is computed that there are some 20,000 feeble-minded children at present of school age in England, and those who have been lately—since 1890—starting Voluntary Homes for elder girls of this description are only too familiar with the distressing results of leaving them uncared for. If such feeble-minded destitute children, when without proper natural protectors, could be adopted and remain under legal guardianship longer than others—say till the age of twenty-one—it would give time for their faculties to improve, and many might be saved from ruin. They are often very affectionate, and their judgment might be reached through their hearts.

May I, in conclusion, venture to express a hope that

an increasing number of persons, who have at heart the highest welfare of the classes that have sunk so low, will devote themselves to the deeply interesting and rewarding work connected with the Poor Law?

DISCUSSION.

MR G. E. LLOYD BAKER (Hon. Secretary of the West Midland Poor Law District) said that both the papers were so excellent, and everything was so clearly stated, that there would be few people who would differ from the writers. He was very much struck by the wish expressed by Miss Clifford that parents might be detained and compelled to work for their children. The law was very tender about the liberty of the subject, and he did not think much could be done in that way, but the children might be detained; the ins-and-outs ought to be detained. In Belgium, labour colonies were started, and people were able to go to them and discharge themselves when they liked. It was soon found necessary to alter that system, and the colonists were now detained for at least six months. Many of the men would have had the strength of mind to maintain themselves if they had not known that they could return to the labour colony whenever they liked. He believed that the Belgians had found that the six months' limit acted as a deterrent to vagrancy. In spite of parents they ought to have the right to place the Guardians *in loco parentis* to children who were deserted, or whose parents' habits promised to be a danger to their bringing up. (Hear, hear.)

MR E. JONES (Highworth and Swindon) said he was one of the representatives of a mixed rural and urban Union. The difficulty his Board experienced was in getting situations for the children. Cottage homes seemed to him to be a good thing, from the experience of Bath in the last few months. How could the children get a start in life? Having from sixty to ninety children in the Union, it was a perplexing question. Bath had the advantage of opening homes in a business centre, and thus securing employment for the children. The idea of centralised homes for the weak-minded was a very good one, and very suitable for a large county like Wiltshire. He thought that the Conference would tend to influence opinion in the direction of detaining the worthless parents of ins-and-outs.

MR A. H. A. HAMILTON (St Thomas, Devon) said that boarding-out struck him as a good plan, but most of the cottages of the poor were overcrowded. The most unhappy class of all were the poor children who were dragged from one Union to another. In the midst of all the Jubilee rejoicings it was a humiliating thing to think that there were so many Englishmen who had no part or lot in the prosperity or greatness of the country. It was the custom at the present day to clamour for an alteration of the law—to draw up a Bill, and agitate

for a change. People have an idea that everything could be settled by Act of Parliament. Administration was much more important than legislation. The Poor Law was in itself a good and wise one, but it required most careful administration. Guardians had quite as much power as they could ever use. The Children's Aid Society had recently taken up a test question, whether a child of a vagrant mother came under the Act as not under proper control. Mr Lushington, at Bow Street, held that he had power to commit the child to a home. They did not need more power than that. The order was made under the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Act.

Mrs FULLER (Chippenham) said that Mr Jones stated that his Union found the greatest difficulty in getting the children into situations. That must arise from the want of training of the children. In Trowbridge, for some months past, they had had a school of cookery, and the children of the working classes had been admitted for instruction in domestic work. There was a sort of scramble for the children in that school. The superintendent of the school was inundated with letters begging for children, however slightly they might have been trained. The same thing applied to boys. There was a Workhouse in Wiltshire where the boys on returning from school were put into a yard and left entirely to themselves. How was it possible for those boys to learn anything that would be useful to them in after-life. The boarding-out system opened up a very different future for both boys and girls. The children learned the small details of family life. The Workhouse children had no such advantages. It was not only in that way, but in the home life afterwards. When a Workhouse girl went to service the control of the Guardians ceased, and the same thing applied to boys. They could dismiss themselves from work and nobody could say anything to them; but if a child had been in a cottage home, and had known what family life and affection were, that child would return to the home until another situation was found. She had had some fifteen years' experience of having large numbers of children from large London Unions, and in no case had the children failed to return to the foster-parent if they left a situation. They had been told that cottage homes were already crowded. It was necessary before a child could be boarded out that the home should be approved by the certified committee. She was strongly in favour of boarding-out. It was far preferable to cottage homes, admirable as they might be. They were good as long as they were kept small enough, and often they had to be placed under the management of a spinster who had had no experience of children—(laughter)—whereas the foster-parent was generally a mother. (Cheers.)

Mr W. CHANCE (Hon. Secretary of the Central Poor Law Conference) having asked Mrs Fuller the question, said he felt quite sure Mrs Fuller would not have advocated boarding-out except under the control of properly certified committees. Mr Austin King put the case for the various systems very fairly. In talking about this

question of Poor Law children, they ought to express their indebtedness for what the Poor Law Authorities had done in the past towards making the children self-supporting and good citizens. Many of the children had done exceedingly well, thanks to the education and training given in the Workhouse Schools. (Hear, hear.) He was not advocating Workhouse Schools, but he thought they ought to render just recognition of the good that Workhouse Schools had done. He mentioned that that morning in the train on the way from London a very prosperous-looking man had informed him that he was brought up in a Workhouse School, and in reply to a question he ventured to put the man laughed at the idea that he had been in any way hampered by his bringing-up. (Cheers.) It was quite possible that the new system of detached homes would be found to have serious defects which they could not see at the present time. The large schools were not very desirable for girls, but a large school for boys was one of the best ways of bringing them up, just like the great public schools in fact. They ought to be cautious about the boarding-out system; many people advocated it as if it was the panacea for pauperism. He was of opinion that boarding-out children in the Union to which they belong was not a good system. By removing them into another part of the country they escaped undesirable relatives and friends. It was quite a mistake to suppose that by adopting a particular system they could get certain results. They might have the very best system in the world, but unless it was well administered they would get bad results. In talking of London, they must remember that it was a huge city with five million inhabitants, and that there was no similarity between London and the country. The children in the barrack schools were well looked after. At Anerley Schools there were about 900 children, and the girls were so well trained that the managers made it a condition that they should not go into a situation where less than two servants were kept. That showed that the training was very good. Unless the children are well looked after when boarded-out they might be made into little drudges. (Hear, hear.)

Mr W. BOUSFIELD (Kensington Union, President of the South-Eastern Poor Law Conference) said he hoped that it would be possible to make the Conference a permanent institution. He had had a great deal to do with the arrangements for various Poor Law Conferences, including the Central and South-Eastern, and he knew the great difficulty there had been in keeping them alive at first; but when they were once thoroughly organised they had prospered, and he thought there was no chance at the present time of any of the larger Conferences in England coming to an end, or becoming spasmodic only. (Cheers.) He had rather hoped to hear more about the difficulties that beset the rural Guardians, the conditions of life in urban and rural Unions being very different. There could be no doubt that rural Guardians had much greater difficulties to meet with

than those in the towns. In dealing with children the specific had no classification, and that was very difficult where they had only small numbers of children to deal with. He thought the suggestion that the Unions should combine was a very useful one. Might he ask rural Guardians to see whether it was not possible for them to combine for the purposes of dealing with special classes of children whom it was impossible to keep with the others or to board out? (Hear, hear.) The Union of which he was a Guardian was one of the earliest to make the experiment of cottage homes. Their home at Banstead was, he believed, opened before that of Birmingham. The initial expenditure was large, and that had probably prevented the system from being carried out so largely elsewhere. In almost every case it had been possible to find a good opening for the boys after leaving the homes. They received a certain amount of industrial training, but it was not allowed to trench upon the proper elementary schooling. The teachers were from the London Board Schools, and the instruction was equal to that given in a Board School. There had been the greatest possible ease in getting situations for the children, especially the girls, for persons were only too glad to get them as servants. They had apprenticed many of the boys, and although the cost had been in some cases £25 or £30 it had been money well spent, as the boys had risen to be masters in their trades. It was, however, impossible for the Guardians adequately to look after the children after they had left school. Every one must be grateful to the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants and the Girls' Friendly Society for the admirable work they had done in that direction. (Cheers.) He hoped that Guardians would in time receive greater powers for dealing with ins-and-outs. He agreed with Mr Hamilton that they should use the present law as far as possible. It was a duty they owed to the children to take them away from their vagrant parents.

Mrs MOOR (Truro) said she had had a cottage home for thirteen years and had closed it now, after dealing with some sixty children. She found that the best article was not offered her. She agreed with the speaker who said that it was the system. Every system had good in it if well administered. She lived in a remote village in Cornwall, near Truro, and used to receive children from London and the large towns. She found the children good situations, but they were always bound to lose the first place and to return. If they could keep their hold on them, and keep them straight until they got the second or third situation, girls were certain to succeed. It was endless work keeping the home; of course she had matrons. If ladies would take out a certificate for a certain number of years, and then close the home, it was better than trying to keep it open after their own connection with it had ceased.

Mr EUSTACE BUTTON (Bedminster) said he had always found that the warmth with which a particular scheme was advocated was in proportion to the novelty of the scheme. Everything depended upon

those whom they placed over the children. They must get superior persons as officers, and they must pay them well, and let them feel that the Guardians were in thorough sympathy with them.

Colonel HARBIN (Yeovil) said he differed, with fear and trembling, from the experienced gentleman the Secretary of the Central Conference *in toto* as to the value of the old Workhouse Schools. When he became a Guardian twenty years ago, the greatest blot in the Workhouse was the school. After a while he got permission for the children to go to the public elementary school, and a marked improvement in the children was the result. At first they were marched in two by two by the porter; afterwards they were allowed to go like other children; and then the corduroys went. (Cheers.) As regards foster-parents, his own experience was that those who had never had any children were the most affectionate foster-parents. (Hear, hear.) The greatest difficulty had been to make the unworthy parents pay for the children. They ran away and left the children chargeable.

Mr A. G. RUSK (Wells) said he could recommend the boarding-out system. It had been most successful in his Union for many years past. Board out the children, but in other Unions. Also send all the children to the public elementary schools. (Hear, hear.)

Mr JAMES APPLETON (Choriton, Manchester) expressed his pleasure at having been present to hear the papers. His Board preferred cottage homes to the boarding-out system.

Mr MURRAY-BROWNE (Local Government Board Inspector) said that the decision given by Mr Lushington at Bow Street that a child might be sent to an industrial school on proof that the parent was a vagrant had been followed in many cases. He supposed that the reason Boards of Guardians did not take action in such cases was the fear that the cost of the child would be saddled upon the Union. But the decision, as now followed, would enable Guardians to deal with cases of exceptional cruelty and hardship. Very few people realised how well large numbers of Workhouse children had turned out, and he was much obliged to Mr Chance for the instance mentioned by him of the man in the train that day. One of the most distinguished men living in this country at this present day was a workhouse boy. There were also two clerks to Boards of Guardians, who were brought up in the Unions where they now acted as clerks. There was no exception to the rule, "That which is best administered is best." (Cheers.)

Mr E. N. MULLINS (Shaftesbury) said Mr King's suggestions as to the conditions under which an inmate might apply for his discharge was a good one. He was not so eager to take charge of the children of vagrants as one of the speakers seemed to be. It would encourage vagrancy instead of repressing it. It would please many of the vagrants very well, indeed, to have their children taken charge of, and brought up at the expense of the ratepayers—(hear, hear)—and it would be a very considerable object-lesson to the honest poor. He

would rather see vagrancy checked by making it a penal offence for a person to be a professional tramp.

The Rev. J. F. HOMAN (Tisbury) contended that the Guardians should have power to detain adults who are continually going in and out of the workhouses.

The following members were elected as the South-Western Conference Committee:—Cornwall, the Rev. H. N. Purcell; Devon, Mr A. H. A. Hamilton, Chairman, St Thomas; Dorset, Mr Palairet; Somerset, Mr Bailward; Wilts, Mrs Fuller—with power to co-optate three additional members.

The following were chosen as representatives on the Central Conference Committee:—Mr Clutterbuck, Mr Austin King, and Mr Edward J. Domville, Chairman, Exeter Board.

The Conference then adjourned.

TUESDAY, 20TH JULY.

The President invited the Conference to decide as to the place of meeting of the Conference next year. Places suggested as suitable were Taunton, Plymouth, Exeter, Yeovil, Salisbury, and Bath. The latter was likely to have been again chosen, but the Chairman pointed out that naturally they being in Bath were in a majority for that place, and asked them to take into account the claims of other districts.

Mr G. P. FULLER said he was voting for Plymouth, in order that the Conference should be held alternately between Bath and that place, which gave a chance to the extreme ends.

The contest was ultimately between Plymouth and Exeter, the former having 31 votes in its favour and the latter 23, so Plymouth was selected. It was decided to have the meeting at about the same time of the year.

The PRESIDENT regretted to state that Lady Grove, who was to have read a paper that day, was unable to be present owing to illness. Mrs Fuller, however, had consented to take her place.

THE PROPER PRINCIPLES AND ADMINISTRATION OF OUTDOOR RELIEF.

BY MR W. CHANCE,

Hon. Secretary, Central Poor Law Conference.

IN applying myself to the consideration of the subject selected by the Committee for discussion at this Conference, I should like to feel that I could persuade the Conference that the entire abolition of outdoor relief is both desirable and possible ; but I know that to urge this drastic solution of the question would be inopportune at the present time.* Besides which, the title of my paper involves the proposition that outdoor relief cannot be done away with. My duty, then, is to try to show how it can be administered so as to lessen the evils which have been so often pointed out at Poor Law Conferences as attaching to it.

I am aware that of late years it has been questioned whether outdoor relief is such a very bad thing after all, and whether it is not the "Workhouse" which is the real evil. I am afraid it is little use to ask those who argue thus to glance at the state of England previously to Poor Law Reform in 1834. They will reply that circumstances alter cases, that you cannot compare England now with what it was then, that the social conditions have since changed much for the better, and that therefore there is no likelihood of our ever having such times again. I admit the premises, but I deny the conclusion. I could produce instances to show how easy it would be to pauperise the country once more, but I should be straying from my subject were I to do so. Indeed, so long as the Prohibitory Order of 1844

* Boarded-out children, and lunatics and imbeciles in asylums, are classed as outdoor paupers in the official returns, but it is evident that their case is a special one, the children boarded out being either orphans or deserted, and the lunatics and imbeciles receiving what is practically indoor relief.

exists and is acted upon, it is safe to say that these times will not come back.

In the South-Western Poor Law Division the vast majority of Unions are administered under this order, or under similar orders. There are only three places in the division which as large towns are administered under the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order of 1852, viz., Exeter, Plymouth, and Stoke Damerel.

The Prohibitory Order forbids the grant of outdoor relief to *able-bodied* persons, except in certain specified cases ;* whereas the Regulation Order, which

* These cases are :—1. Where such person shall require relief on account of sudden and urgent necessity.

2. Where such person shall require relief on account of any sickness, accident, or bodily or mental infirmity affecting such person, or any of his or her family.

3. Where such person shall require relief for the purpose of defraying the expenses, either wholly or in part, of the burial of any of his or her family.

4. Where such person, being a widow, shall be in the first six months of her widowhood.

5. Where such a person shall be a widow, and have a legitimate child or legitimate children dependent upon her, and incapable of earning his, her, or their livelihood, and have no illegitimate child born after the commencement of her widowhood.

6. Where such person shall be confined in any gaol or place of safe custody, subject always to the Regulation contained in Art. IV.

7. Where such person shall be the wife or child of any able-bodied man who shall be in the service of Her Majesty as a soldier, sailor, or marine.

8. Where any able-bodied person not being a soldier, sailor, or marine shall not reside within the Union, but the wife, child, or children of such person shall reside within the same, the Board of Guardians of the Union, according to their discretion, may, subject to the Regulation contained in Article IV., afford relief in the Workhouse to such wife, child, or children, or may allow outdoor relief for any such child or children being within the age of nurture, and resident with the mother within the Union.

The Article IV. above referred to runs as follows :—Where the husband of any woman is beyond the seas, or in custody of the law, or in confinement in a licensed house or asylum as a lunatic or idiot, all relief which the Guardians shall give to his wife, or to his wife or children, shall be given to such woman in the same manner, and subject to the same conditions, as if she were a widow.

was framed to meet the special difficulties of large towns, gives the Guardians a full discretion in the matter, except in regard to *able-bodied* men while they are "employed for wages or other hire or remuneration" by other persons.

But to take only the Prohibitory Order, it is clear that the exceptions to the rule forbidding outdoor relief to the able-bodied adds such a large number of persons to those who are not able-bodied, that a Board of Guardians which allows itself to become at all lax in the administration of relief in this form will never want for applications. The main object of my paper, then, is to show how such applications can be discouraged. The great thing to be borne in mind is that the Poor Law is only established for the relief of the "destitute," or in other words, that the rates are not a charitable fund. It was never intended to enable Guardian A. to relieve poor person C. out of the pocket of ratepayer B. Although it is impossible to define the line which separates "poverty" and "destitution," there is an infallible practical test, and that is the offer of the "House." The "poor" will not, as a general rule, accept the offer, a "destitute" person will; and although it has often been asserted that such a person will starve rather than enter the Workhouse, the allegation has never been proved. So long as the practice of granting relief outside the Workhouse remains, so long will fraud and deception as to destitution flourish. But as it is hopeless, as I have said, to contemplate the absolute abolition of outdoor relief, what we must consider is, how the evils attaching to it can be minimised to the smallest degree. I venture, therefore, to draw attention to a few points which bear on this question.

In the first place, each Union must have a proper staff of Relieving Officers. It is impossible to lay down any general rule as to how many Relieving Officers a Union should have; but if any Relieving

Officer has under his charge a greater number of cases than it would be possible for him to visit and thoroughly investigate at least once in every quarter, in addition to visiting and reporting upon every fresh application after the most careful inquiry, you may be certain that a number of cases which ought never to get relief will get it. In a town where the population is confined to a small area, one Relieving Officer can look after more cases than would be possible for him in a country Union, where the area is large and the population scattered. In a country Union which I know, and where outdoor relief is very carefully guarded, the one Relieving Officer has about 100 *cases* to look after. This Union has a population of 5,600, and an area of nearly 31,500 acres, to give round figures. This number of cases implies about 150 *individual* paupers, but probably in a town one Relieving Officer could manage double the number of cases and paupers. It has been said that no Relieving Officer ought to have more than 250, or at most 300 paupers on his list, if he is to keep himself informed of the circumstances of those relieved. I should say myself 150 for country Unions and 300 for town Unions.

In the second place, the Board of Guardians must see that the Relieving Officer gives them a full account of the circumstances of every applicant for relief. The columns of the Application and Report Book should be fully filled in. I am afraid that this is not often insisted upon. But even where it is fully filled in, the Relieving Officer should be prepared to answer questions as to rent, the state of the house, the character which the family bears, what is being done by charity, &c. Unless the fullest information is forthcoming, it is quite impossible for a Board to decide upon how the case should be relieved, what should be the amount of the relief, and for how long it should be given. Many Boards are disposed to rely upon the simple statement of one of their body, such as, "Oh! I know the case

well; it is very deserving." Now I have been a Guardian myself for some years, and I took a great deal of trouble to ascertain personally the *facts* in relation to applications for relief in my parish, so much so that I told the Relieving Officer to inform me at once of any applications for relief he might receive, when I visited the case as soon as possible. I can say frankly that I never could get to the bottom of any case, and I do not think any Guardian can do so. There is always something kept back.

Whenever a case came up from my parish—and I am glad to say after the first two years that happened very seldom—I would never recommend it myself. I supplemented the information given by the Relieving Officer as far as I could, and then I left it to the Board to decide. I felt very strongly that a Guardian ought not to place himself in the position of an advocate for *outdoor* relief for cases from his own parish. I have seen cases—you must have seen cases—where after a Relieving Officer has made his statement, and has, in answer to the Chairman's question, recommended the offer of the House, a Guardian has got up and pleaded successfully for outdoor relief. I cannot imagine anything more discouraging to a capable officer who is trying to do his duty than after having been asked for and having given his opinion, the Board should decide directly to the contrary because the Guardian from the particular parish, who may never have visited the home, and whose statement is often of a hearsay character, asks that they should do so.

Long ago Mr Woodhouse drew attention to the drawbacks attending this "personal knowledge" of individual Guardians, especially in cases where the applicant for relief was not in attendance at the meeting of the Board to answer questions himself. "There cannot," he said, "fail to be instances in which a Guardian well-acquainted with the circumstances of some case from his own parish is tempted to divest

himself of his judicial character as a member of the Board, and assuming that of an advocate of the applicant, to urge some relaxation of the mode in which the Guardians would under ordinary circumstances deal with the case. His brother Guardians are, in the absence of the pauper, unable to support their own views by questioning him, and ascertaining his condition for themselves, and being compelled to rely solely upon the report of the Relieving Officer and the opinion which had been expressed by the Guardian of the parish, give way against their better judgment, and assent to the relief which he has proposed. The Guardian whose views have thus been adopted is naturally willing to assent to the wishes of each of his brother Guardians in turn under similar circumstances, and thus, without being consciously actuated by any improper motives, Boards of Guardians are constantly led to depart in practice from what they would in theory acknowledge to be sound principles of Poor Law administration. At a meeting of a Board of Guardians which I attended in an agricultural Union in the West of England, I took occasion to call their attention to the exceptionally high rate of pauperism which prevailed in their Union, and to several points which appeared to me objectionable in their mode of administering relief. A large number of Guardians were present, and in the course of the discussion which ensued one member of the Board stated it as his belief that the large majority of the Guardians agreed individually with what I had said, and were prepared to assent to the principles which I had endeavoured to enforce. 'But somehow,' he added, 'when we come to act as a Board we don't carry them out!' None of the other Guardians expressed any dissent from this statement, and I have no reason to doubt that it was correct. As another drawback from the advantage resulting from the personal acquaintance which the Guardians in agricultural Unions possess with the

circumstances of those who apply to them for relief, I may mention that I have met with instances in which Relieving Officers have advanced this fact as a reason for not themselves visiting the homes of persons in receipt of relief so frequently as they ought, and have excused themselves for neglecting this duty—which is one of the most important which has been imposed upon them—upon the ground that the Guardian of the parish is sure to be aware of any alteration in the circumstances of their cases.”

In the third place, a Board of Guardians should have some recognised principles on which they will grant or refuse outdoor relief. Usually they have none, but come to a decision on what are called the “merits” of the case. Now my experience has been that these “merits” depend simply upon the constitution of the Board at the time the case is brought forward, and I have seen identically the same kind of case offered the “House” at one Board meeting and allowed outdoor relief at another. If the same members sat through every meeting held during the year, it is possible that you might get similar decisions in similar cases, but we know very well that this is not the fact. Some Guardians attend very irregularly, those who attend most frequently are certain to be put on various Committees, and are often out of the Board Room when the relief lists are brought forward. Indeed after the general business of the Board has been concluded a “general” move takes place, perhaps only half the members remaining in the Board Room. The only way, therefore, to secure uniformity of decision is by having printed rules of relief, and religiously sticking to them. Most of the large urban Unions which are best administered work under such rules, and indeed where the size of a Union renders Relief Committees necessary they are obliged to follow these rules, and they can only be departed from by the permission of the whole Board. Such Unions as

Nottingham and Paddington, and a great many others of a like nature, work on this system with the most beneficial effects. I must not burden this paper with many examples of such rules, but will read you those in force in a well-administered country Union. They are as follows :—

“ OUTDOOR RELIEF.”

General Rules agreed to on the 15th day of May 1882, by the Guardians of the Union, for their guidance in the administration of Relief.

1. Out-relief to be allowed only to persons who can satisfy the Board of Guardians that their destitution has not been caused by their own improvidence or intemperance, and that whilst in work, they did all they could to make provision against times of sickness or want of employment. Those who cannot satisfy the Guardians as to this, if relieved at all, to be required to enter the Workhouse with their wives and families (if any).

2. No out-relief to be granted in any of the following cases except under such special circumstances as, after consideration by the Board of Guardians, may seem to justify a deviation from the Rule :—

- (a.) To non-residents.
- (b.) To single able-bodied men or single able-bodied women temporarily disabled.
- (c.) To wives deserted by husbands.
- (d.) To wives or families of convicted prisoners.
- (e.) To able-bodied married men (who, when in work, earn good wages) on account of temporary illness of themselves, wives or families.
- (f.) To single women pregnant, or with illegitimate children.
- (g.) To able-bodied widows without children, or having only a small family to support.
- (h.) To wives or families of militiamen during duty.
- (i.) To persons having relatives capable of maintaining them.
- (j.) To persons living in cottages above the average rent of the neighbourhood.
- (k.) To persons living in cottages or on premises reported by the Sanitary Officer as injurious to health.

3. No midwifery order to be granted (except by way of loan) in cases where the children dependent on their parents are less than four in number, unless the father is not able-bodied.

4. No relief to be given in clothing or shoes.

5. Out-relief to be granted for a fixed period only, which shall

not, in any case, exceed thirteen weeks, or in cases of sickness, four weeks.

6. No relief to be given to any person unless upon his or her own personal application (if able) to the Relieving Officer of the district in which he or she resides.

7. Applicants for relief whom the Relieving Officer has not had time to visit at their home should be relieved by him in kind only, and that by way of loan, or by an order for the Workhouse.

8. In cases where there has been no order of the Board of Guardians, meat, stimulants, &c. &c., recommended by the Medical Officers, should only be given by way of loan by the Relieving Officers, except to such applicants as are ascertained by previous personal inquiry to be destitute.

9. In every case where the Workhouse is ordered, medical and other relief to be discontinued, and an intimation to that effect to be sent to the Medical Officer by the Relieving Officer.

10. Relieving Officers to take their relief personally to such outdoor paupers as may be unable to receive it elsewhere than at their homes, and to check, by all means in their power, the practice of passing relief through the hands of neighbours, strangers, or children.

11. That the Medical Officers of the Union be at liberty to attend the Meetings of the Board of Guardians from time to time as may be convenient to them.

12. Out-relief to be given if necessary to women in immediate widowhood for a term not exceeding two months. In cases where the Guardians consider it necessary, relief to the mother may afterwards be afforded by the reception of children into the Workhouse, the widow herself not being required to accept indoor relief.

N.B.—Out-relief to be “given only to the actually destitute and not in aid of wages.” (See P. L. Minute, 20th November 1869.)

“SET A PREMIUM ON THRIFT AND A DISCOUNT ON
IMPROVIDENCE.”

All working men are earnestly recommended to join, without loss of time, some Registered and Certified Benefit Club or Provident Society, and the Guardians advise all persons to become members of one of the Medical Clubs now existing in the several parishes in the Union.

These Rules are printed in the Half-yearly Reports of the Union, so that they are always before the eyes of the Guardians. And not only this, but they soon get known in the Union, and persons who would otherwise apply for relief do not do so, knowing well that the Guardians could only offer them the

“House.” But the great advantage of such Rules is that they afford “a ready means of applying to the circumstances of a given case, when duly ascertained, the experience gained by dealing with other similar cases.” A Board working without any Rules to guide it must either grant outdoor relief to almost every case which is excepted from the Prohibitory Order, or, if it begins deciding on “merits,” work injustice.

In the fourth place, when outdoor relief has been granted, a Board should take care that the visits of the Relieving Officer are systematic. It has been laid down that this duty is not properly performed—(1) When he has seen the pauper but has not visited the home; (2) when he has visited the home but has not seen the pauper; (3) when he has neither seen the home nor the pauper, *because he knows all the circumstances of the case*; and (4) when he is satisfied with the report of any Guardian upon the case, and being thus satisfied, neither visits nor makes further inquiry. It stands on record that one painstaking Relieving Officer attributes to this systematic visiting the success he had met with in reducing his outdoor relief list. He saved nearly £1,500 to the rates by visiting the poor at their homes, not only once a quarter, but continually, whenever and wherever there was a doubt that the relief given was not used for the purpose intended.

In the fifth place, whenever the applicant for relief is in a fit state to do so, he should be made to present himself at the meeting of the Board so as to give the Guardians present the opportunity of asking him questions. If this rule is enforced, the number of applications for relief will diminish in the most remarkable way. An applicant does not mind going a short distance to the pay station of the parish to apply to the Relieving Officer, but he very much objects to travel to the place where the Board meetings are held, and yet this is no special hardship to him. The meetings are usually arranged to coincide with market days, and

therefore he is in the pleasant position of being able to kill the proverbial two birds with one stone.

In the sixth place, every Union should abolish its "permanent" list. No case should be granted relief for more than at most thirteen weeks at a time.

In the seventh place, outdoor relief should always be refused when there are relations in a position to assist. There is, at the present day, no more crying evil than the disinclination shown by children to help their parents even when they are well able to do so. Sometimes a Board of Guardians actually take it upon themselves to grant the relief and then to recover the value of it from the children, thus imposing additional burdens upon the already heavily-laden Relieving Officer in cases where the children might just as well pay the money direct to their parents.

Lastly, every Board should publish a Half-yearly Report or at least a Yearly Report, containing a proper statement of accounts signed by its Clerk, after they have been audited, and lists of the indoor and outdoor paupers belonging to each parish of the Union relieved during the half-year, with (in the case of outdoor paupers) a statement of the cause necessitating the relief and its amount. These Half-yearly Reports, if properly drawn up, will be found to be full of interest, and the more information they contain about the administration of the Poor Law in the Union the better. Thus they should contain comparative statements of the pauperism and expenditure of the Union, so that it may be seen at a glance whether the Union is progressing or the reverse, and by progress I refer more especially to reduction in outdoor pauperism, because the curious result of reducing outdoor pauperism is that the indoor pauperism does not increase, and what more could any Guardian desire? *

* As examples I give the figures for three Unions, viz., for Bradfield (Berks), where outdoor relief is abolished except in most exceptional cases; for Wallingford (Berks), where it is administered

I venture to say that, if the above suggestions I have made are carried out, the Guardians will soon find their work of relief dwindling down to such proportions that they will not only have more time at their disposal to carefully consider all applications for relief, but also to make the relief given to the few deserving cases which will remain more adequate to their necessities.

I know it will be said that if outdoor relief is administered so strictly as I consider it ought to be,

very strictly; and for Whitchurch (Hants), a typical agricultural Union, where it is granted more freely but still under rules.

Number of paupers relieved on the 1st January 1871 and 1896.

Union.	Year.	Indoor Paupers.	Outdoor Paupers.	Total Paupers.	Population in 1871 and 1891.
Bradfield ... {	1871	238	999	1,237	15,852
	1896	96	35	131	18,017
Wallingford ... {	1871	193	904	1097	14,641
	1896	163	229	392	14,706
Whitchurch ... {	1871	70	487	557	5,558
	1896	38	149	187	5,658

[The figures exclude lunatics and vagrants.]

The effect of this reduction of pauperism on relief expenditure is very marked. The following table gives the expenditure in relief for the years ended Lady Day 1871 and 1895 :—

Union.	Year.	In Main-tenance.	Out-Relief.	Total Relief Expenditure.	Cost of Relief per Head of Population.	
		£	£	£	s.	d.
Bradfield ... {	1870-71	2,152	4,632	10,999	13	10½
	1894-95	1,049	192	3,926	4	4¼
Wallingford ... {	1870-71	1,290	5,515	9,200	12	6¾
	1894-95	1,291	354	4,475	6	1
Whitchurch ... {	1870-71	416	2,174	3,650	13	1½
	1894-95	592	640	2,210	7	9¾

that no Guardian would be able to retain his seat, but would be turned out at the first opportunity. I do not believe it. The English people like justice. They are open to argument, and if the case for strict administration is fairly put to them, they will see the justice of it. After all, it is the honest, industrious, and thrifty working men and women who manage just to keep from coming on the rates that are most injured by lax administration of outdoor relief, and surely they are the first persons to be considered.

I am putting no imaginary case when I refer to two families living in close proximity to each other—it may be in the same block of cottages. The respective heads of these families earn the same wages—maybe they work for the same employer. The one is a man who frequents the Village Club, belongs to a good Friendly Society, and somehow or other manages to save. His children are well clothed, and the cottage is well kept, neat, and tidy. The other spends most of his spare time, and as much of his wages as he can avoid giving to his wife, in the public-house. He may belong to the Slate Club of that establishment. He never puts by a penny. His wife is slatternly, and his children go about in rags. The evil day comes, he finds himself in difficulties, and he at once goes to the parish. His case is found to come within the exceptions of the Prohibitory Order. Every one knows his story, but he gets outdoor relief, because the Board are afraid of offering him and his family the “House,” partly on account of the breaking up of the home, and partly on grounds of expense. What a lesson this is for his neighbour, who has in the end to pay for him!

I say that outdoor relief to such a case as this ought, in the interests of society, not to be granted. It has not even the advantage of being economical, for it is a direct encouragement to others to go and do likewise. On the other hand, the refusal of outdoor

relief to such a case would act as an incentive to others to put themselves in such a position that they will never have to apply for it. I hope that there will always be the healthy dislike of the Workhouse which exists at present. But while I say this, you must not understand me to mean that I would make it a *penal* establishment. It was never intended to be that, nor indeed is it at all necessary that it should be. So long as you have proper arrangements for setting the able-bodied to work, you can safely give the other inmates as much liberty as is consistent with the necessary discipline of the establishment. You can provide married quarters for the old couples, you can let the old people have their much-prized tobacco, snuff, and tea. When they go outside the precincts they may be allowed to wear the ordinary clothes of their class. The corollary of restricted outdoor relief must be a *well-conducted* Workhouse. You may make it as bright and cheerful as you like, which can be done at a very small expense. Don't block up the windows of the rooms occupied by the old people and children with high walls. Remember that, since able-bodied pauperism has to all intents been got rid of, the country Workhouse has become the refuge for the old and infirm, and the "night nursery" of children. But it would require a separate paper to go into the interesting subject of Workhouse arrangement and management, and besides it is beyond the scope of my paper.

I am afraid I have already exceeded the limit of time allowed me. I can only repeat that no Guardian fearlessly acting on the principles I have tried to explain, and who is determined that no persons who have recklessly brought themselves into a state of destitution shall be given relief outside the Workhouse, need fear for his seat. At first he will find himself in a minority when he divides the Board, but slowly and surely his enunciation of principles will be accepted.

After a time he will find other Guardians actually using his arguments as their own. This is the turning point, and some fine morning he will find himself, to his own astonishment, elected by acclamation as Chairman of his Board, an office which, if he continues in the path which has led him to that position, he may expect to fill so long as he finds himself able to do so. There is another path which a Guardian may take—it is the wide and not the narrow one, and consequently the easiest. He may come on to the Board, as I have been told has actually happened, in the firm determination to fulfil the promises made to the electors to get outdoor relief for those of his own class, and particularly of his own friends and relations; but I venture to say he will never obtain the confidence of his fellow Guardians. He will find that promises are more easily made than fulfilled, and if he is not turned out neck and crop at the next election, he will probably resign in disgust of his own free will, and go back to his village, a sadder if not a wiser man.

Of course I am prepared to hear the views I have expressed in this paper characterised as harsh and unfeeling. But my experience has been that the best and really kindest administrators of the Poor Law are those who do not allow their hearts to govern their heads; who, remembering that “the bane of all pauper legislation has been the legislating for extreme cases,” are not carried away by exceptional hard cases to break through rules; and who consider carefully what effect the grant of outdoor relief in any one particular case may have on the whole community before they grant it. I have not the least doubt in my own mind that the main cause of “old age” poverty, of which we hear so much nowadays, has been the facility with which old people could in the past, and still can in the present, obtain outdoor relief, which has led them while young to make no provision for their declining years, and has more than any other thing led their children to forget

the duties which they owe them. I think, also, that this is one of the main causes why Friendly Societies have been so slow in enabling their members to make provision for the contingency.

Whether or not I am right in my conjectures, I do feel that the more difficult it is made to obtain outdoor relief, the greater chance there will be of securing the most happiness, the most comfort, and the most contentment to the greatest number.

APPENDIX.

The following tables are compiled from the Twenty-fifth Annual Report of the Local Government Board. The first table shows the ratio of paupers to every 1,000 of population in the Poor Law divisions specified; and the second table the rate of Poor Law relief expenditure per head of population in each of the same divisions. It will be seen that in both these tables the South-Western Poor Law division comes out the worst. The third table shows that this division has also the highest ratio of *outdoor* pauperism to populations. It is clear, then, that the bad position which the division occupies is entirely owing to the freedom with which *out-door* relief is given.

	TABLE I.	TABLE II.	TABLE III.
Division.	Ratio of Paupers to every 1,000 of Population.	Rate of Relief Expenditure per Head of Population.	Ratio of Outdoor Paupers to every 1,000 of Population.
South-Western - -	40.4	6/8	34.7
Eastern - - -	37.1	6/6½	30.5
Welsh - - -	33.0	5/8	28.9
South Midland - -	29.8	6/	23.8
West Midland - -	29.2	5/5¼	22.1
North Midland - -	28.8	5/4¾	23.8
South-Eastern - -	28.7	6/4¼	20.3
Northern - - -	22.5	4/3	17.5
York - - -	21.6	4/5¼	17.1
North-Western - -	20.1	4/6¾	12.9

THE PROPER PRINCIPLES AND ADMINISTRATION OF OUTDOOR RELIEF.

BY MRS FULLER,

Guardian of the Poor, Chippenham.

IN the discussions which have so frequently taken place on the subject of this paper, it seems to me that two points are often overlooked — first, the difference between the Poor Law conditions of 1834 and those of the present day; second, the difference between Urban Unions and Rural Unions. I should like to say a few words on each of these points.

I.

When the Report of the Poor Law Commissioners of 1832-34 was written, England was face to face with a terrible outbreak of able-bodied pauperism, threatening serious danger to the community; the idle and dissolute were then being supported by the hard-working, struggling ratepayer, already suffering heavily from the effects of the severe financial crisis of 1825 and 1826. In 1832, a modest, industrious girl might starve, while her bolder neighbour received 1s. 6d. per week for each illegitimate child; industry, probity, purity, and prudence were melting down into depravity and social ruin, while pauperism increased with a rapidity which had never previously been known. The principles of the 1834 Poor Law are only defensible on the ground of the practical exigencies of the time; but have not the exigencies by which they were then justified passed away? The chief objects of those Commissioners have been attained; able-bodied pauperism is almost a thing of the past, and the evils we have to encounter to-day are not those of 1834. We are face to face with another economic question, How is the poverty of old age and sickness to be

adequately provided for? As has been well said, we have to consider, not so much “the case of the workers or the won’t-workers,” as “the case of the past-workers and the can’t-workers”—the problem, generally speaking, of the treatment of people out of work through no fault of their own.

In 1834 the Workhouse was needed as a real House of Work, but now our Workhouses are virtually only Homes for the aged, the afflicted, and the thriftless; and there is something very terrible in a system by which, when a man who has laboured and toiled all his life grows old and infirm, and can toil no more, he is to be treated as if he had done something wrong, his home to be broken up, and he, who would still work but cannot, is to be ordered off into the Workhouse, to the companionship of ne’er-do-weels who could have done better for themselves had they so chosen.

Inquiries made by Mr W. A. Hunter, M.P., have shown that old age pauperism is now, throughout England, largely in excess of all other pauperism, and yet that it is considerably less than other pauperism in those Unions in which indoor relief alone is given. If old men and women past work are most deserving of help (as is generally conceded), it follows that the Indoor Unions give least relief in the cases where it is most required and most justifiable.

II.

Of course, all the arguments brought forward against out-relief are directed mainly against *indiscriminate* out-relief; but in a Rural Union it is far easier to arrive at a knowledge of the true facts in connection with any case than it can be in an Urban Union, and therefore in a Rural Union—

(1.) Out-relief need never be indiscriminate. In a country village the details of any man’s life—the wages he earns, the number of his family, the illnesses or troubles he has struggled through, his steadiness or

unsteadiness, his thrift or unthrift—are well known to all his neighbours, and generally more than one Guardian on the Board is conversant with all the facts; and the decision of the Board on any particular case is arrived at after full information has been given, not by one official only, but by independent Guardians.

(2.) Then another fact must not be lost sight of. If any old man or woman past work is given an order for admission into an Urban Workhouse, he or she can be easily and frequently visited by relations and friends, and can return these visits as often as leave can be obtained for them. But how different this is in a Rural Union! Our Union of Chippenham extends twelve to fourteen miles from east to west, and six to eight miles from north to south, and admission within the Workhouse involves—to an inhabitant of Christian Malford or West Kington, for instance—complete severance from old friends and neighbours, banishment from old haunts and associations, and deprivation of all intercourse with relations, save with those few who are both able and willing to incur the trouble and expense of a very occasional visit to the Workhouse. Can we wonder that semi-starvation *amongst friends* should so often be preferred to a higher scale of comfort in a distant Workhouse!

(3.) The Workhouse test is admirable when applied to the thriftless and the undeserving, but in what way can the difference between this class and that of the deserving poor be more clearly marked than by offering indoor relief only to the one, while giving ample outdoor relief to the other?—thus enabling the latter to pass the declining years of his life amongst his own kith and kin, and at his own fireside. Much has been done in the last few years in the way of classifying the inmates of Workhouses, and granting additional comforts to those considered most deserving of such privileges; but I would suggest that this classification might be carried out with greater advantage in the case of

applicants than of *inmates*, and that the granting of out-relief to an aged man or woman of good character would be far more appreciated than being placed in Class I. when in a Workhouse.

(4.) Tables of statistics have been compiled which show the sad and undeniable fact that the number of paupers in every 1,000 of population in our South-Western District is far higher than in any other part of England, and those ignorant of rural life in these south-western counties are apt to assert that the immediate cause of this high rate of pauperism is the freedom with which out-relief is given. But these statistics make no mention of the respective rates of wages in these counties, and I feel sure that it is to the low wages of the rural parts of Dorset, Somerset, and Wiltshire that we must look for the real cause of our unenviable notoriety. When an agricultural labourer is earning only 10s. or 9s. per week, and often only 8s. per week during the winter months, how is it possible for him, with a growing family, to put by anything at all for times of trouble or sickness? How is it possible for him to spare anything from such a sum towards the support of his aged parents? I know I shall be told that the outdoor relief given in these districts is a main cause of this low rate of wages, but this again is a statement made by those who do not know the facts. Our farmers on the Wiltshire Downs often say, when remonstrated with on the low wages they give, that they do not want the men, they would only too gladly see half of the men leave their villages, and would then give good wages to those that remain; but the love of home and of the free and healthy outdoor life, and often, alas! the want of knowledge and means to go elsewhere, keep the men there, and the problem of indoor or outdoor relief has to be faced.

(5.) Another striking difference between the cases of Urban and Rural Unions is the result of the amount of house rent in each locality, and the consequent

variation in what may be considered adequate outdoor relief—6s. outdoor weekly relief to an aged couple paying from 1s. to 1s. 9d. a week for rent, and provided with cabbages and potatoes from their own little garden, bears a widely different aspect when they are paying from 3s. to 4s. weekly for worse accommodation and no garden in a town, and is a fair answer to the argument of the poor ratepayer groaning at the injustice of outdoor relief being given to his neighbour. Is it not better *for him* that 6s. should be spent on this out-relief, rather than 12s. for indoor relief of the same old couple?

(6.) Lastly, I would urge that whereas in a crowded town the Workhouse is often a haven of rest, cleanliness, and quiet to the wearied worker, in a *Rural* Union it must necessarily seem more like a prison to those who have spent their lives in green fields and pleasant country homes.

In conclusion, let me remind you that certain Unions are held up to us as examples of the benefits to be gained by a very strict administration of, or entire refusal of, outdoor relief, and statistics are given as proofs of these benefits. But before acquiescing meekly in these proofs, I think we may fairly ask for further information. I should like to know the *result on neighbouring Unions* of an indoor system; I should like to know the number of charities available for relief of deserving poor, and also the death-rate in the Indoor Union as compared with others; I should like statistics as to the poverty of the population of the Indoor Union. We must know much more than we do of the history of these Unions, the present condition of their poor, the state of the surrounding parishes, and the details and cost of the Poor Law administration, before we accept them as conclusive guides.

We have before us the fact that the great majority

of Boards of Guardians, who are practical men and not extremists, who have every interest in keeping down the rates and encouraging thrift, but who persistently abstain from acting up to the doctrines so frequently preached to them, relieve more paupers *outside* than *inside* the Workhouse.

The ratio of pauperism rises and falls with poverty, and is not really affected by either system of relief, outdoor or indoor. The strict rules adopted by any one Union may very probably result in a diminution of pauperism in that Union for a time, but the poverty and the human misery is increased; and I think the Workhouse is a cruel deterrent when offered to families who, by a wise assistance in time of need, may be carried through the hardships of winter, of want of work, or of any temporary disablement from illness or accident.

When people come to know that, if they have done their best for themselves, it will be recognised as a merit, and they will receive different treatment from the idle and thriftless, their industry will be encouraged and their moral tone raised; but if they live in a Union where the Guardians do *not* recognise good conduct nor merit, and applicants find that whatever they may have done for themselves they are treated in the same way as the idle, they necessarily become reckless and unconcerned as to their personal habits and characters.

In a word, the Poor Law of the present day should aim at the prevention, as well as the relief, of destitution; and a wise administration of outdoor relief seems the most direct way of attaining this end.

DISCUSSION.

An animated discussion took place as to the duration of speeches, a majority being in favour of five minutes rather than ten for each speaker. Eventually it was agreed that Mr Willink (Bradfield Union) as a special speaker should not be subject to any limitation, but that five minutes should be the limit for other speakers.

Mr WILLINK (Chairman of the Bradfield Board of Guardians) said

he had been invited to address the meeting. He trusted they would give him credit for an honest desire to put forward that which he believed to be for the true interests of the poor and of the country in general. He was practically a stranger among them, and might not know the difficulties which individual Guardians had to contend with in that neighbourhood, and he hoped they would bear with him if he appeared to ignore difficulties which to them were very real. Both the papers seemed to him to be exceedingly good papers. He felt great sympathy with his friend, Mr Chance, in being followed by so persuasive a writer and reader as Mrs Fuller, with whom, however, he (Mr Willink) did not agree. They were nevertheless all working towards one end—the reduction of pauperism ; and he would not wish to tie any one down to a particular road, provided that end was reached. He would take Mrs Fuller's paper first. He had only seen it that morning, and could hardly deal with it in detail. In the first place, he disagreed absolutely with what Mrs Fuller said at the beginning that the principles of the Poor Law of 1834 were only defensible because of the circumstances then existing. He believed those principles would last as long as there was any Poor Law and any human nature at all. The law was founded on the basis that it was not right to make the condition of the man who came to the State for support more desirable than that of the persons who had to support him. If all Guardians were like Mrs Fuller many Boards which were now badly administered would approximate much more nearly to Bradfield ideals though by a different method. Mrs Fuller had asked what was the effect of an "indoor system" upon adjacent Unions. With regard to that, Bradfield was near Reading and Wallingford, where outdoor pauperism had been very much reduced, and in other Unions there was a growing desire for improved administration. It was not an easy task, however, to fight against an established system of administration, and time must be allowed. As to the death-rate, it compared favourably with other places : in 1895 the corrected death-rate was 13.5 per 1000. [Mrs Fuller said her point was that the death-rate outside would be higher in an indoor Union than in an outdoor Union.] Mrs Fuller wished to see poor persons of good character given out-relief instead of receiving privileges by way of classification in the Workhouse. It was opposed to the whole theory of the Poor Law that poor relief, especially out-relief, should be a badge of merit. Persons who deserved well of their country could generally obtain support from private means or organised charity which would support them much better than coming on the rates. Did Guardians wish to see family ties weakened, and could outdoor relief ever have any other effect than to weaken those ties? If money was forthcoming from the rates, the incentive to help relatives was weakened. Out-relief also encourages favouritism, making it more and more difficult for Guardians to refuse relief even where they saw that the result would be bad. The Friendly Societies would

flourish less if the rates were always to be the first resort in case of need. The great rise of these societies, of which they were so proud, was largely owing to the Poor Law of 1834. He hoped that Friendly Society organisations would in the near future be extended to women, and make them more independent. As practical men they knew out-relief encouraged deceit. It was so difficult to get at the truth of people's circumstances. There were many other points he would like to talk over with Mrs Fuller if time allowed. But passing to Mr Chance's paper, with which in the main he entirely agreed, he thought there were one or two points which he did not fully bring out. The first was that out-relief when it was given should be *sufficient*, instead of being just enough to prevent other help, yet not enough to maintain the case. Then again they could not exercise too much care in selecting good officers, and when they had got them let them trust them. They ought to treat them with confidence and pay them well. All systems were fallible, but in large towns it had been found a good plan to have cross-visiting officers, to pay surprise visits to the recipients of relief. He would not go into the question of medical relief on that occasion. He would like to say something about his own Union, about which he understood he was expected to give some information. The Bradfield Union was in Berkshire, and almost entirely agricultural in its nature. Its acreage was 62,651 acres. About twenty-five years ago it was a distinctly badly administered Union, like most Unions at that time. There was then (say 1st January 1871) a population of about 16,000, and no less than 259 paupers in the House, and 999 receiving outdoor relief. The figures now (say 1st January 1897) were 121 in the house, and about 18 outdoor paupers; and the population was 18,000. Homes had not been broken up, and people had not been driven into the Workhouse. [A member inquired the number of inhabited houses and the relative population. The President said questions must be deferred until the end of speeches.] Wages were about the average of the south-eastern counties. The actual rate of wages paid to a man did not correspond to his total remuneration, as wages were often supplemented in various ways. The regular rate of wages for an ordinary man averaged fourteen shillings a week. He did not get his cottage in as a rule, but cottage rents were low, and generally included a good garden. His predecessor, Mr Bland Garland, was a man of large experience, and to him most of the credit was due. He went on to the Board strongly in favour of out-relief, but before long he came to the conclusion that it was a wrong principle, and he worked with the then chairman, Mr Stevens, one of the old Poor Law Assistant Commissioners, to reduce outdoor relief. By degrees the Board backed him up, and since Mr Garland's death he (Mr Willink) had had to carry on a very easily sailing ship. The work was easy, for they did not get applications, as people had come to understand the system, and it was acquiesced in. There were no more hard cases

in Bradfield than in adjoining Unions. Men who knew the Union twenty or thirty years ago testified to the improvement in the condition of the poor there. The attacks in the press were very few, and were all from one quarter, and after two years of the Local Government Act, and having had two-thirds of the Guardians elected, the supporters of the indoor system were practically as strong as ever. At a recent by-election a clergyman was standing, on what they at Bradfield called sound principles, against a man who placarded the whole place with "*Vote for So-and-so and outdoor relief to the backbone.*" But the clergyman got in, and the other man did not. In another Union, Brixworth, in North Hants, where the strict administration party had been beaten, the results of a year of lax administration had been recorded by Mrs Calverley, and formed almost as strong an argument as they could wish for in favour of the Bradfield methods. He recommended every one to read her pamphlet called "*Looking Back.*" It could be obtained for twopence from R. Harris & Son, Bridge Street, Northampton.

Mr CLUTTERBUCK (Chippenham) said he did not intend to contradict Mr Chance, but that at the outset at any rate of the treatment advocated by him they might find that the remedy was worse than the disease. Take the case of an old woman who might have lived in the same cottage for twenty years, and did not want her home broken up, surely the evil of compelling her to go into the Workhouse might be far greater than the good which might be done. It would create a feeling of uneasiness in the minds of the ratepayers of the district that hardship and suffering were existent in their midst. Again, in the case of women whose husbands were in gaol for assaulting them, it would be inflicting further punishment on the women to insist that they must not have out-relief.

The five-minute limit was applied, the speaker remarking that he had not got to his point.

The Rev. H. N. PURCELL (St Austell) said their duty as Guardians was to relieve the destitute. Mr Chance said that a destitute person would never refuse the offer of the House. It would be impossible to disprove much of what he said unless they held a coroner's inquest. There were people in his district who would rather die than enter the Workhouse. It would perhaps be well in some places to have more relieving officers, but he did not like to face the question of cost. He demurred emphatically to the doctrine that a Guardian ought not to differ from the opinion of the relieving officer. He was vain enough to think that he could get to the bottom of a case as well as any relieving officer, and he did not see why that official should be so tremendously outraged if his views were opposed by the Guardians.

Mr ROGERS (Pewsey) wished to thank Mrs Fuller for her admirable paper, which thoroughly expressed the views of the working classes in his neighbourhood. With regard to Mr Chance's remark about starvation, I would remind him that there were over forty deaths from starvation in the City of London only last year,

though there were these nice little Workhouses to go to. Why was that? Because of that pride which most of them admired and found all over the country. In his own Union applicants for out-relief nearly always attended, and their appearance was invariably a powerful argument in their favour. When the old men and women came in the humanity of the Guardians got the better of the pauperology evolved in the seclusion of their study. Where people spent their lives on wages which were not sufficient to enable them to bring up a family and save, they must come on the rates in their declining years. As to widows, it was better to grant them out-relief than to force them into the Workhouse, and make the children into little paupers.

Mr MULLINS (Shaftesbury) asked if the Guardian's opinion was not to be accepted, what was the good of having Guardians at all. Savings effected by relieving officers might be little better than blood-money. Poverty was the principal claim to relief, and it was not for Guardians to inquire too closely into the origin of it, for the poor had not all had equal advantages of education and training, and of constitution. With regard to Mrs Fuller's statement about wages, he did not find that there was a plethora of labourers. He agreed with her that a wise and judicious system of out-relief was the best in the rate-payers' interests, as well as being by far the most humane to the poor.

Captain CARTWRIGHT (Wimborne) said that Union had the distinction of being the highest in out-relief of any in that district. He was a Magistrate as well as a Guardian, and he knew that some of the recipients of out relief were the worst characters that could be found. It was a bad policy to relieve women with illegitimate children. No child was ever sworn on to a father in that Union, and there was the greatest possible increase in bastardy. Besides, the people had no incentive to get away from their villages, and they got so inbred that never had he seen so many blind, deaf, and bastards in almost every family. If the friends of the working classes would tell them that the matter of wages was very much in their own hands, it would be very much better for them than the kind of talk they had had to listen to there that morning. In the North of England not only did they get more money, but they generally did twice as much in a day as a South of England labourer.

Mr JONES (Swindon) entirely agreed with Mrs Fuller's paper. He did not think that the Bradfield Guardians need meet more than once in six months. After eight years' experience of Poor Law work, he was much more in sympathy with the views of Mrs Fuller than with those of Mr Chance.

Mr PRESTON THOMAS (Local Government Board Inspector) said he would be very glad if out-relief could be administered with the restrictions suggested by Mrs Fuller in her admirable paper, for which he was very grateful. It was given freely in many counties without any inquiry at all. If Somerset administered relief in the careful way which was introduced by the late Sir Baldwin Latham in Shropshire,

the county would save about £50,000 a year, and would spend about £52,000 instead of about £103,000. In that day's discussion the province of charity had been entirely ignored, and they had heard only those hard cases that made bad law. In one instance a Board gave an applicant out-relief because to offer him the House would hurt the feelings of the son, an exceedingly flourishing innkeeper in their town. Such cases were so common that for the present he had no higher ideal than that of Mrs Fuller.

Colonel HARBIN (Yeovil) said the real question was whether it was a disgrace to come on the rates or not. The tendency of the Legislature was to make people think that the State would do everything for them. In spite of Mrs Fuller's paper, he thought the question of out-relief *versus* indoor relief was settled long ago. The people were being taught to rely less upon the individual and more upon the State, what with free education and other developments of Socialism.

Mr PHELPS (Swindon) said that the Guardians of that Union had found the plan of granting out-relief a success. But it must be given with great discrimination, and it must not be given in miserable pittance to the deserving poor.

Mr W. HAMMICK (Salisbury) regretted that too often relieving officers regarded the poor only as "cases," not as human beings. The greatest care ought to be exercised in the selection of relieving officers and masters, and in fact all the Workhouse staff.

Mr GRANVILLE E. LLOYD-BAKER said he did not think that much reliance could be placed on the inquiries of Guardians, who frequently did not like to rake up things which were likely to hurt an applicant. Low wages never prevented people from saving—it was only a matter of management; and he had invariably found that those who saved most were also those who were of most assistance to their friends. The extension of out-relief did tend to lower wages, as it removed one great incentive to self-help. In his own Union out-relief had been greatly decreased, and the moral and material condition of the people had improved.

Mr HENRY FORD (Wimborne) said he was an English farmer, and he could say that the farmers did their best for their labourers.

The Rev. J. F. HOMAN (Tisbury) recommended Guardians to study Mr Chance's book on the Poor Law. They should co-operate as far as possible with organised charity.

Mr T. H. BAKER (Mere) said that the refusal of out-relief frequently led to the friends coming forward and saving an aged person from the degradation of the Workhouse.

Mr H. J. JAMES (Chippenham) maintained that the Workhouses were much better than the dwellings of many poor people. While the Guardians were doing all they could to reduce pauperism, the Legislature was increasing the opportunities for drinking and flooding the country with drink.

Mr J. APPLETON (Chorlton, Manchester) also spoke.

Mr CHANCE, replying to the various speakers, said that good medical clubs in each parish would do much to reduce pauperism.

Mrs FULLER begged the Guardians to remember that they were elected not as Guardians of the ratepayers, but as Guardians of the poor, and that it was for them they should act.

Lord EDMOND FITZMAURICE said a deep debt of gratitude was due to the lady who sat on his right, Miss Chapman, for her organisation of the meeting. The relative merits of outdoor and indoor relief constituted one of the most difficult questions of Local Government. As they were dealing with human beings, it was impossible to push any of the arguments to their logical end.

The meeting closed with a hearty vote of thanks to the Chairman.

North Wales District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE FOR THE COUNTIES
OF FLINT, DENBIGH, CARNARVON, ANGLESEY,
MONTGOMERY, AND MERIONETH, HELD AT LLAN-
GOLLEN ON MONDAY AND TUESDAY, 13TH AND
14TH SEPTEMBER 1897.

CAPTAIN B. T. GRIFFITH BOSCAWEN, *Chairman of the*
Wrexham Board of Guardians, PRESIDING.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference.

ANGLESEY—

A. M'Killop (Chairman).
Samuel Hughes.
Thomas Hughes (Clerk).

BALA—

Evan Jones (Chairman).

BANGOR AND BEAUMARIS—

Hugh Thomas (Chairman).
R. Benjamin Evans (Clerk).

CARNARVON—

T. R. Jones (Chairman).
T. W. Williams (Vice-Chairman).

CORWEN—

D. R. Jones (Chairman).
E. O. V. Lloyd.
Miss Lydia Hughes.
Thomas Hughes (Clerk).

DOLGELLY—

W. R. Davies (Clerk).

FESTINIOG—

Thomas Roberts (Clerk).

FORDEN—

A. C. Humphreys Owen, M.P.

HOLYWELL—

William Roberts (Vice-Chairman).
C. J. Batters.
James Prince.
Mrs Isabella Webber.
P. Harding Roberts (Clerk).

LLANWRST—

E. Jones Williams (Chairman).
John Roberts.

NEWTOWN AND LLANIDLOES—

E. Morgan.
Rev. T. H. Hughes.

PWLLHELI—

R. Owen Jones (Clerk).

RUTHIN—

Mrs Eleanor Lumley.
Mrs E. Roberts.
R. Humphreys Roberts (Clerk).
John E. Roberts (Master).

ST ASAPH—

Miss M. E. Bennett.
John Williams (Vice-Chairman).
Miss B. Evans.
Charles Grimsley (Clerk).

WREXHAM—

Captain B. T. Griffith-Boscawen
(Chairman).

WREXHAM—*continued.*

Simon Jones (Vice-Chairman).
Christmas Jones.
William Lewis.
John Allen.
Charles W. Parsonage.
T. Owen Jones.
B. Bowen.
Richard Hughes.
Thomas Sumnal.
J. A. Harrop.
Miss Jones.
J. Oswell Bury (Clerk).
W. T. Cheetham (Relieving Officer).
Edward Williams ,, ,,
Joseph Owen ,, ,,

VISITORS.

F. T. Bircham, Local Government Board Inspector.
E. Jones, Wrexham.
Mrs Griffith-Boscawen, Wrexham.
Mrs Owen, Clynnog.
Major Webber, Chief Constable, Flintshire.

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MONDAY, 13TH SEPTEMBER.

Mr P. HARDING ROBERTS (Hon. Sec.) announced that he had received apologies for non-attendance from Mr Murray-Browne, Mr Jenner-Fust, the Rev. S. A. Boyd, Vicar of Macclesfield, Mr Chance, Hon. Sec., Central Conference, Mr Horace A. Smith, and Mr Thos. E. Parry, Conway, as well as, he regretted to state, from Mrs Keene, Guardian of the Holywell Union, who was to have read a paper, but was prevented from attending by the sudden death of a relative.

The PRESIDENT said the first matter on the agenda was an "opening address by the President." He would not detain them many minutes. He had taken the chair with considerable reluctance, as he thought that some one more connected with the district than he was ought to preside. Last year they had an excellent chairman at Oswestry, Mr Marshall Dugdale—(hear, hear)—but this year their

Hon. Sec., Mr Harding Roberts, who took an immense amount of trouble in these matters, was not successful in getting any one else to preside, and appealed to him to relieve him from anxiety by allowing his name to appear as chairman. He was their chairman at Rhyf and Llandudno, and he wished that some one else could have been found on this occasion, as he believed in having a variety of chairmen. However, he would endeavour to do his best in the position. He was strongly of opinion that the President's speech in opening a Conference of that kind should not be a long one, and that he ought not to trench on the paper about to be read. In making a few remarks he would therefore try to make them as general as possible. It would be remembered by those who were at Oswestry last year, that it was decided to try the experiment of having two half-day Conferences instead of one whole day. That plan had been pursued with considerable success at several Poor Law Conferences ; whether it would be a success in North Wales remained to be proved. They would know when they saw whether members would be able to put in the half-day the following day. Taking one of the most important subjects they had to deal with—that of out-relief—the statistics which Mr Bircham put before them every year were most valuable, but they were also somewhat embarrassing. They showed differences which were exceedingly difficult to account for. He was not going at a Conference like that to compare one Union with another. He thought that no hard and fast line could be laid down, Unions differed so much in regard to the class of population, and as to the presence of works and mines, or in being purely agricultural ; but even allowing for those very great differences, the statistics showed matters which it would be difficult to account for, forming food for much reflection. In North Wales they were on the whole improving in the matter of out-relief. He held this view, that when they granted relief, it should be ample. It was a great mistake to grant a series of small doles. He would look much more to the number of persons relieved than to the amount granted to each person. They should be very wary as to granting out-relief where there was any doubt as to whether the applicant could get on without it. Guardians might well consider how it was the figures differed so much in different Unions. There was a vast improvement in the condition of Workhouses and of the Workhouse poor. By the way, he wished that some other name could be invented for the institutions with which they were dealing. In Scotland they were called poorhouses. There was very little work done in them. They were more of asylums for the aged and infirm. The picture drawn by Charles Dickens some sixty years ago was, he feared, only too faithful a representation of what those places were in those days. That stern and wholesome ridicule did a great deal of good, but on the other hand it caused the Workhouses still to be regarded as very terrible places. He knew people in his district who would rather die than go into the Workhouse. If they gave it a new name, people might be more easily in-

duced to enter it. When he first visited the Wrexham Workhouse thirty-five years ago, there was only one nurse for all the wards, and there were more patients then than now. She was an excellent old woman, not of the "Sairey Gamp" type—very good to the patients, but thoroughly ignorant of nursing. There were now three nurses at Wrexham, and one of them was a trained nurse. Nursing had improved to such an extent that they were often told that things were too comfortable in the Workhouses. It was a very difficult problem to know how far to go; it would not do to give paupers better treatment than hard-working ratepayers outside could afford for themselves. There was no danger of that in their district at present—in fact, a great deal remained to be done. The Local Government Board had recently issued an order as to nursing. It was simply to the effect that paupers were not to be employed as nurses except to a limited extent under the supervision of trained nurses. In the Consolidated Order of 1847 the only qualification was that they should be able to read the labels on medicine bottles, now they required a certificate that they had had special training in nursing. When he first went to Wrexham he was very much struck by the very little attention that the public paid to Workhouse matters and the condition of the poor. Now there were Ladies' Committees, and, for instance, the Brabazon Employment Scheme, which had answered exceedingly well in Wrexham. Mrs Griffith Boscawen was the Hon. Sec., and she would be pleased to give any information about it. They wished to make the inmates of the Workhouses as comfortable as possible, but they must remember that the Poor Law was not charity, and that a Poor Law overstrained operated as a direct discouragement of private charity. The Poor Law was intended for the relief of the destitute, not for those who were merely poor—it ought to be looked upon as the last resort. As to the practical use of such Conferences, some people said they were of very little use. He would point out that there had been in recent years a great improvement in the administration of the Poor Law, and that that improvement began just about the time that the Conferences were inaugurated, and he believed the Conferences had had something to do with it. For years he had advocated the consolidation of the Poor Law statutes and orders. He hoped that when the Local Government Board was reorganised and had more time, it would devote attention to the subject of consolidation. Another great need was a uniform valuation for all purposes, imperial and local.

The following paper was then read :—

THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE POOR LAWS.

BY MR T. W. WILLIAMS,

Vice-Chairman of the Carnarvon Board of Guardians.

THE question which is entrusted to me to bring before the Conference to-day is one of supreme importance—so much so, that to do justice to the matter, I feel that the duty devolved upon me should have been undertaken by some more capable and experienced Guardian than myself.

Inasmuch as the Local Government Act, 1894, has extended the representative qualification to a large section who hitherto had taken but little interest in the question of Poor Law administration, it is very necessary that they should make themselves well acquainted with the principles of the law which they have been elected to administer, so as to enable them to act justly and effectively for the benefit of both the poor and of the ratepayers.

The story of the origin of Poor Laws has been told over and over again, and Poor Law Conferences have been amused at the accounts given of the strange punishments accorded to beggars if they dared to cross the boundary of their native parish. The revelations of the Commission appointed to inquire into the working of the Poor Laws contain truths which are stranger than fiction. Up to that period the administration was entrusted to Overseers appointed by the Parish Vestries. These Overseers, glad to escape the odium which attaches to a too scrutinising distribution of the public money, fell into habits of blind and wholesale benevolence, with the natural consequence of such an increase in the rates that the burden of maintaining the poor menaced the prosperity of the country, leading it within a measurable distance

of national bankruptcy. At this period it was found that wages were very low, and strange to say the condition of a man receiving poor relief became as good as, or better, than that of an independent labourer, inasmuch as he received about as much money without having to work for it, and so many of the labouring classes preferred to live on the poor rates, making no effort to get work, or if they had work, they took no pains to retain it, as they did not mind whether they were discharged or not. They always knew they had the poor rates to fall back upon. In the evidence taken before the Commission there are cases on record where the poor rate was 28s. in the £ ; such was the state of things that gave rise to the new Poor Law of

1834.

Briefly, the principal changes from the old Poor Law are :—

(1.) Doing away with Poorhouses ; the abolition of the services of unpaid Overseers save only as controllers of the work, and entrusting the work of relieving the poor to paid officers ; and the grouping of parishes into Unions.

(2.) The duty of collecting the poor rate was continued in the hands of the Overseers. The Poor Law was, for the future, to be administered by the Guardians, or more strictly speaking, by paid officers acting under their directions.

(3.) Regulations were formed containing several restrictions as to granting relief, more especially relief out of Workhouses. It would be impossible without making it tedious to enter into the details of the machinery provided for carrying out the work of administering the Poor Laws. Sufficient for my purpose will be to make a few observations upon the two latter changes brought about by the new Poor Law.

COLLECTION OF RATES.

Literally speaking, I am wrong in referring to collection of rates as one of the changes effected by the new Poor Law of 1834, for the duty imposed upon Overseers in the collection of the poor rate was not repealed. They continue to be responsible for this very important duty. Personally I am strongly in favour of unpaid services, and I hold that every rate-payer should be glad of the opportunity of serving his parish. I am persuaded that if this was acted upon with zeal, the uneasiness and grumblings, as well as the unpopularity of public rates, would be minimised, if it would not disappear altogether. I do not want my words to mean any want of confidence in the paid officials, but my observation is such that has led me to form the opinion that whenever the people do the work themselves, they are more content with the burdens imposed upon them. Experience has, however, taught the lesson that however desirable this may be, it is quite impracticable that the collection of rates could be properly done by voluntary officers save in very small parishes. In large parishes the work is very complex, requiring great care; indeed such has now become its nature, that one can only say that it has acquired a speciality of its own, and the duty can only be properly done by persons who from long experience may be termed experts.

While the duty, the legal duty, and responsibility of the collector of the rates falls upon the shoulders of the unpaid Overseers, we all know that in actual practice the whole work is done by the paid Assistant Overseers under the supposed control and direction of the Overseers. The rule on paper is excellent, and indeed cannot be improved upon, but in practice it has turned out in too many instances to be a miserable failure. The cause of the failure is not very far to seek. In the first place, Overseers are changed annually; before they get a fair insight into the duties

and responsibilities of their office their year of office expires, and this most important work is entrusted to another set of novices, and consequently the real work falls naturally into the hands of the paid assistant without any practical and efficient control whatsoever. I have always thought that the Legislature missed the opportunity while they were passing the Local Government Act of 1894 of abolishing the office of Overseer and transferring all the duties to Parish Councils. These Councils are more directly amenable to public criticism than Overseers, and from their very nature could be expected to control the collection of the rates with greater keenness than Overseers. It is somewhat difficult to speak on this subject without giving offence to some of the very best public officials in the country, but the frequency in late years of the reports of defalcations makes it unnecessary for me to apologise for submitting the subject for the consideration of the Conference. The fact is that the hundreds of thousands of pounds collected in poor rates are collected without any control whatsoever. This is not right. I am far from blaming the Overseers, who are often appointed without their knowledge or consent. They are too frequently busy men, with no time to devote to the control of the rates, or persons with no training nor aptitude for accounts. The only remedy I can suggest is, that matters be allowed to remain precisely as at present, with the addition that no rate be valid unless formally allowed by the Assessment Committee, and that such Committee be empowered to see that the rateable value on which the rate is based agrees with the valuation in force, as allowed by them, as well as generally to check the rate book and the half-yearly account of the Overseers as entered in the book called Overseers' Receipt and Payment Book prior to its submission for audit. These slight changes would disturb but little upon the existing state of things, nevertheless I venture

to think that they would effect such a reformation in the important work of collection of rates that would inspire the public with more confidence, and bring the work in line with the higher business methods of transacting public work.

RELIEF.

So much has been said and so much has been written upon the subject of the administration of relief that I must confess to a difficulty in finding anything new to say upon the question. Among the singular things of life nothing is more singular than to find Guardians of many, many years' standing confessing that nothing has puzzled them more than how to discharge their duty properly towards the poor. On the one hand, how many Guardians have not had the bitter experience of having been deceived—the most pitiable objects, the most pathetic story of want and destitution turning out to be the grossest frauds? On the other hand, how many Guardians are there who have not known cases of honourable poverty bravely met, only brought to light when it has become too late to relieve or to cure, but rather only to relieve the last moments of the dying sufferers? But to my mind the greatest possible puzzle is the question of relieving the able-bodied—the widows and orphans. I do not think there can be a difference of opinion as to the necessity of relieving the sick and clearly necessitous. I have not known any Board of Guardians but have been too glad to do their very utmost, and to dip deeply into their funds to relieve this class of poor. Neither have I seen any Board inclined to show mercy to the fraudulent pauper if caught; indeed I have never known a case in which the Guardians have not shown even an eagerness to mete out the most rigorous punishment to this class of paupers. Neither can there be a difference of opinion as to the relief to be given to the sick. All

Guardians that I have met are agreed that no treatment can be too generous to the sick poor.

DIFFERENCE OF OPINION.

The existing difference of opinion amongst us as regards outdoor and indoor relief is coming yearly more apparent. The carefully tabulated information of percentages of the relief given in the North Wales District, furnished by Mr Bircham in the Report just issued, shows that the different Unions have the courage of their opinions in this matter, and fully practise them. The disparity between 6s. 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per head in the Anglesey Union and 2s. 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per head in the Forden Union is indeed a startling exposition of this diversity of opinion on the question. Probably the advocates of the different systems are carried by their convictions to an extremity which is reprehensible. On the one hand, those in favour of the Workhouse test overlook the fact that "poverty is no crime," and do not consider that the feelings of the unfortunate should have every consideration. It must be borne in mind that there exists in Wales a strong feeling of antipathy amongst the poor to indoor relief, and that they will endure great privations rather than submit to it. This feeling exists principally amongst what we may term the better class of paupers, who as a rule are respectable old couples, widows, and able-bodied who have been plunged into deep distress through sickness or other circumstances over which they had in no way control. Such class should not be subjected to what is evidently considered as a degradation, but treated in such manner as would help them to retain their self-respect. On the other hand, I readily admit that there is a laxity of investigation in cases brought before the Guardians, with a result that there are a large number of undeserving poor in receipt of outdoor relief. This has been fully proved by Mr Bircham's report of his personal visit to the dwellings of the poor in a certain

Union. It was shown by him that outside relief was given to men and women of disreputable character, who actually squandered on drink the relief extended to them. Such class should undoubtedly be offered the House, so as to be brought under direct control. I firmly believe that by the exercise of due care and a sympathetic supervision by the Guardians, especially in thickly populated districts, the existing difference in the administrations of out-relief would cease to exist. But our quarrel (if we may term it so) is more specially with regard to relief to young widows, and able-bodied, and orphan children. We know the official view impregnated with the doctrines resulting out of the Report of the 1834 Commission ; they fear to grant relief lest its touch will sap asunder all desire of self-help and self-reliance. Our reply to this is that in the rural Unions we know the paupers. There is hardly a case but there are Guardians who intimately are acquainted with all the circumstances connected with the applicants for relief. The panacea of the Workhouse test might apply in Unions so thickly populated that it is not possible to know anything about the cases. However strange it may seem, we are prepared to affirm that the majority of our paupers, especially in the rural parts, are persons held in high esteem in the spheres in which they move, and the little assistance given to them by way of parish relief enables them to keep their homes intact, and with their own earnings they continue to maintain a respectable home, and bring up their children as well, often better, than their more favoured neighbours. Suppose we imagine that the converse were the case, and that the relief was given only in accordance with the strictest ideas of officialism, what would be the consequence? The mother would have to go out charring, or to be so engrossed in work that she could have little or no time to devote to her children ; instead then of drawing from the ranks of paupers the flower of the working-men as at present,

the children would be so neglected at home that both their moral and physical nature would be stunted, and posterity would suffer. Besides, we in rural Unions are not so enamoured of Workhouses that we care to offer it as a form of relief. We are of opinion that Workhouses are calculated to destroy the sense of family ties which the system of outdoor relief preserves. The classification in Workhouses is deficient, inasmuch as the good and the bad must mingle together. The story of the worm in the ointment eating up all its goodness is not truer than the evil influence of one of the Workhouse inmates, brought to pauperism through a fault of his or her own, upon the respectable paupers who would be compelled to seek relief in the Workhouse if the Poor Laws were administered in the strictest sense which Guardians are often eloquently told they should be administered. I repeat that our outdoor paupers are too good to go to the Workhouse, and, so far as my observation goes, the children are better brought up in out-pauper homes than in Workhouses. I don't mean this to reflect upon the treatment of children in Workhouses; what I am trying to emphasise is, that the difficulties connected with the treatment of children in smaller Workhouses is such, for my part, that I would be glad if a home could be found for them elsewhere. However firm the discipline, however watchful the care, children cannot fail to come in contact with the adult inmates, and the opportunities of contaminating their young minds are too frequent for me to be an advocate for a vigorous application of the Workhouse test. It has come under my observation the improvement which can be effected in Workhouse children by allowing them a free intercourse with children outside. The Carnarvon Guardians decided some time ago to educate the children at the Carnarvon Board School, and I can assure you that the physical change has been most remarkable, besides their education being

much more efficient. We may be accused of lavish expenditure in outdoor relief, but we think it is justified by—

The preservation of the homes.

The help given when help is really needed.

The protection of children from contaminating influence of Workhouse life.

DISCUSSION.

Dr JONES (Corwen) said there were many there of larger experience than himself. He complimented the reader of the paper, and at the same time pointed out that there could not be any fault found with the present system of collecting rates, at any rate as practised in his own Union. If any alteration was made, the work might fall into the hands of people who would not be anything like so competent to do it. In his Union a lady now did the work, and he was glad to have that opportunity of saying it was thoroughly well done. He was a large ratepayer in the parish of Corwen, and he was not aware that there had been a single mistake since he had been connected with the district. He thought it would be advisable to keep the work in the hands of two or three persons, as he noticed that the larger the Committee, the more loosely the work was done. His Board was very careful in the administration of relief, and there were very few of the recipients who spent much of it on drink. They were good Guardians, and had excellent officials, and they did all they could to find out everything about applicants for relief, for as a rule the Guardians were the largest ratepayers in each parish, and they knew it was their own money which was being spent in relief.

Mr THOMAS (Chairman, Bangor) said such Conferences had proved of great benefit, especially on the vagrant question. Not that there had been any fresh legislation on the subject, they had learned how to make use of the powers they already possessed, and the consequence had been a marked decrease in vagrancy. He was very glad Mr Williams had brought up the question of rate-collecting. In his own experience there had been a difficulty in getting in the money, and the Treasurer wrote to him that they were in debt to the extent of about £1,900, and he could not honour any more of their cheques. One or two parishes were summoned, and they had not had a parish in arrear for some years. There was too much money in fact, because the collector always got in more than the amount of the calls; there were constant complaints about it, and he (the speaker) understood it was illegal to collect more than the amount of the calls. He had been connected with the Union for many years, and the ratepayers trusted the Guardians implicitly. They

stopped relief the moment they ascertained anything adverse to the character of a recipient.

Mr CORNELIUS MORGAN (Newtown) asked whether it would be possible for ratepayers to pay the rates into the bank instead of to the Overseers. It would save an enormous amount of unpleasantness and a great deal of money.

The PRESIDENT said it was a novel suggestion, and he feared not a very practical one.

Mr CHRISTMAS JONES (Wrexham) said the idea would be a valuable one if feasible. He agreed with the reader of the paper that the Parish Councils might undertake the collection of the rates. In his humble judgment they ought to do so. Difficulties were always cropping up under the present system; fresh legislation might be necessary, but that was not an insurmountable difficulty. They were supposed to make their calls as soon as possible after the 25th March, but in some parishes the calls were not made until three or more months after the money was due. There should be a remedy for that. The District Councils or Guardians had no control over the Overseers, because they were appointed by the separate parishes, but the sooner there was control the better for the Unions. There could not be a better authority to entrust the matter to than the Parish Councils. They were in touch with those around them, and the work was much more likely to be attended to by each parish than if three or four parishes were grouped together. As a rule, the men who were placed in the position of Overseers were those who were least qualified for the work. The best remedy yet suggested was the appointment of collectors by the Parish Councils.

Mr SIMON JONES (Wrexham)—The Chairman asked for a better title—a more attractive title—for the institutions with which they were connected than Poorhouse or Workhouse; a term had recently been before the public—"The Paradise of the Poor." (Laughter.) There could not be a more attractive title. He was glad that the reader had touched upon the subject of the collection of the rates. There was one very objectionable feature, that when an Assistant Overseer was appointed, two private individuals had to become personally responsible for the integrity of the officer. It would be much better to obtain the services of a guarantee society. He did not think that even at the millennium ratepayers would take their rates to the bank, as Mr Morgan suggested. It was too often regarded as bleeding. He could not think of any more efficient method of rate-collecting than for the Guardians to appoint their own collectors, who would be responsible not only to the Overseers, but also to the Guardians. The collectors might be required to meet monthly to produce their accounts. The proposal might meet with the objection of centralisation, but they could not find a perfect system unless they adopted that one. He would like to hear some explanation of the vast difference in the amount expended in the various Unions in North Wales upon indoor and outdoor relief.

Outdoor relief to young widows required to be administered with the greatest caution. A little firmness on the part of the Guardians and a little timely encouragement had helped many a young widow to fight her battle successfully without help from the rates. If they once tasted it they were very loath to leave it.

Mr OSWALD BURY (Wrexham)—They had had a great deal of difficulty for many years, until the Guardians decided to appoint a collector to each township, and periodically examined the accounts. The collection of rates was one thing, and the making of them another. Some Overseers made rates for a larger sum than they were called upon for, as there were several expenses, such as printing, to be defrayed. The reader suggested that rates should be submitted to the Assessment Committee before being allowed. The Assessment Committee had enough to do now, and in his opinion it would be better that the Clerk to the Guardians should inspect the rate, and he would then be able to ask what it meant if, while only £250 was wanted, a rate was made for £400. Unless they did that he could not see how Overseers were to be prevented from making rates very much in excess of what was actually required.

Mr SIMON JONES — The Local Government Board issued a model demand note on which the amount required for each purpose had to be detailed, and therefore there could not be a penny collected in excess of what was needed.

Mr T. R. JONES (Chairman, Carnarvon) would be very glad if any improvement in the methods of collection resulted from the deliberations that day. The Overseers did not carry out the work as they ought to do. They appointed assistants. If collectors were appointed by the Guardians, it would be a post for life, and they would not have to care for anybody so long as they did their work honestly and properly.

Mr WM. ROBERTS (Vice-Chairman, Holywell) said that in his own parish the Assistant Overseer was appointed by the Parish Council, and was a permanent official, and there was no difficulty whatever. As to out-relief, all cases were thoroughly investigated by the relieving officer. It was difficult to know what to do with widows who were left with young families, especially where there was no opportunity of earning money by charing. If they took the children into the House, they would very soon require larger Workhouses.

Mr E. O. V. LLOYD (Corwen) felt strongly that there ought to be some system by which old couples in the Workhouses should enjoy the benefits of mutual society. (A voice—"There is.") How far that was practicable in different Unions he did not know, but at any rate it would be one way of making those places more comfortable for their poor. He did not think there was any better way of granting out-relief than by inquiring most carefully into individual cases, and where those cases required it, the help should be ample.

Mr A. M'KILLOP (Chairman, Anglesey) endorsed the views ex-

pressed by the reader as to the appointment of Overseers and Assistant Overseers. What was wanted was control over them during their year of office. Most of the Assistant Overseers in Anglesey made out their rates without consulting the Overseers at all, and the Overseers signed the rates without any inquiry whatever. They wanted some protection against the system of overcharges, and if £200 would meet the requirements of a parish for six months, it was not right to demand £300. Many years ago he was connected with the L. & N.-W. R. Co., and they never knew when the auditor was going to drop down on them. A few things could be brought about without legislation, and would tend to effect great improvements.

Mr THOS. ROBERTS (Clerk to the Festiniog Board) saw no objection to calling the Workhouses "Poorhouses." He could not see what the Overseers were good for, their position was very much of an anomaly. A call was handed to them, and they gave it to the Assistant Overseer, over whom they had no control. It was very hard that the Overseer should be threatened with the bailiffs if the collector got in arrear. The President wished to know how it was that there was such a difference between the Unions in North Wales. It was because the Workhouse test was not sufficiently applied. They ought to try to prevent people from becoming paupers.

Mr HARDING ROBERTS (Holywell) was very much surprised that the rates in some of the parishes in the Wrexham Union were not called for until three or four months after the rates were made. There must be something wrong there. With regard to the collection of rates, he thought it depended very much upon the collector himself. There was a widespread and erroneous notion that the rates should not be collected until as near the half-year as possible. The collector should disabuse people of that idea. Persons having the collection of rates should be appointed by the Guardians, and they would then get a certain security of tenure. If the making of a rate were left to the Parish Council, it was very doubtful when it would be done, seeing how long they were about their present duties. If all the collectors were under the control of the Guardians, and bound to submit their books for inspection, it would be the means of securing prompt payment of the rates. The question of out-relief had been so often debated that he did not think there was much more to say. He did not think that the relieving officers were properly supported at present in the course they advised in regard to cases. He was in favour of restricting out-relief, but of treating liberally those who were deemed worthy of it. In granting relief the Guardians ought to have regard to the character of the applicant, and consider whether destitution was brought about by the applicant's own neglect. If the thrifty and the improvident were all treated alike, there was no encouragement to thrift.

Mr JAMES PRINCE (Holywell), said their chief function as Guardians was to look after the spending of the money. If they were stricter in administering relief, not half as much money would be required.

There was too much able-bodied relief given in his district, and the Guardians seemed inclined to give it more lavishly, in fact it threatened the independence and well-being of the working classes. The pauper's lot was becoming better than that of the poor working man. If relief was given in kind it would be better, as a lot of money went to people who did not know how to spend it when they got it. If they offered the House oftener there would be less pauperism. Guardians often argued that it was cheaper to give a person eighteen-pence or two shillings a week than to offer them the House ; so it was to that point, they forgot that for one who would take the House there would be ten who would take out-relief. He would be glad if the Local Government Board would define destitution and real poverty.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Vice-Chairman, St Asaph)—If the Guardians investigated each case to the best of their ability, what more could be expected? In his own Union they took the utmost care with every application.

Mr WILLIAM LEWIS (Wrexham)—Perhaps some of their friends could explain how it was that the Carnarvon Guardians spent sixty per cent. more than was spent in Wrexham.

Mr W. R. DAVIES (Dolgelly)—It would be impossible for Clerks to Boards of Guardians to supervise the collectors, as had been suggested. What was wanted was more efficient auditing of the accounts, and for Guardians to insist upon the collectors showing their books and vouchers periodically.

The PRESIDENT said that the best course seemed to him to appoint Union collectors. He had advocated it for years, but without much success, as it was not thought proper to displace the present officers. The office of Overseer was an ancient one, and in these days, when there were so many rates to attend to, it was impossible for an unpaid official to do the work properly. The result was that Assistant Overseers were appointed, and they speedily became independent of the Overseers, and the Guardians had no control whatever over them. He hoped there would be in time some legislation on the point. It was difficult to account for the vast differences between the various Unions. He would be the last person in the world to advocate any harsh treatment of the poor, but he thought there were large numbers of people who were receiving relief who could, with a little assistance from private charity, get on very well without the aid of the out-relief. He saw no difficulty in giving a working definition of destitution. They must not make the Poor Law an engine for helping poor people ; it was the last resource, and every effort ought to be made by Guardians to prevent people from coming on the rates. He moved that the "Conference returns its hearty thanks to Mr Williams for his valuable and instructive paper."

Mr E. O. V. LLOYD, in seconding, said he wished that Guardians could arrive at a uniform treatment of paupers.

Mr WILLIAMS thanked the members for their reception of his paper.

THE CENTRAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE.—The President, Capt. Griffith-Boscawen (Wrexham), Mr Harding Roberts (Holywell), and Mr Hugh Thomas (Bangor), were appointed representatives on the Central Poor Law Conference Committee.

NEXT YEAR'S CONFERENCE.—It was resolved that next year's Conference should be held at Bangor, and that it should extend over two days. The arrangements for the Conference were left in the hands of a Committee consisting of the Chairman of each Board of Guardians.

In response to appeals for a speech, Mr BIRCHAM (Local Government Board Inspector) said that as there were about fifty-three other places where they were pretty well bound to hear him, he never cared to say much at Conferences. The subjects touched upon that day seemed to him to cover the whole of the work of the Poor Law from beginning to end. To remove the great differences existing in the various Unions would mean the destruction of an old tradition; it was called kindness, but it meant the degradation of the poor. A few years ago he drew up a series of recommendations in English and Welsh urging the Guardians to rely more upon the reports of the relieving officers. There was too much in Wales of a going behind the back of the relieving officer. It resulted in a deal of odium for Guardians, and if they would get rid of the practice it would also serve to keep the relieving officer up to his work. He believed that judicious out-relief was a necessity of the situation in a country like Wales, but not to the extent the statistics showed. If they would trace the use to which out-relief was often put they would find that it was used to keep a lot of parasites, and that the recipient lived in a fearful state of neglect. It trained up the younger branches to become hopeless paupers. Guardians should insist on the relieving officers filling up the applications report-book. They ought also not to grant relief for long periods without revision, and all cases should be well under control. He was in favour of giving adequate relief to the deserving poor, and if they carefully watched the question, and kept expenditure down, they could afford to deal properly with the really deserving cases.

The proceedings were then adjourned, and in the evening a Dinner was provided for the Delegates, which was well attended.

Mr HUMPHREYS OWEN, M.P., in a short speech after dinner in the evening, said it was almost a truism to say that the stock of ideas and information which they gained from discussion with one another was one of the most potent engines of progress and improvement—in fact, if one might take a rather large view of things, every one who hoped and believed that the world was destined to grow better and better, was naturally predisposed to think that the survival of the fittest applied to ideas as well as to individuals. With regard to the special work in which they were engaged, there was nothing in which they had more need of assistance and the best information that others could give them. Because they were in a certain sense

the physicians of the body politic, they had to do with the social failures—social failures because they were physical failures. When he was on the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, one witness, who held a similar position to Mr Bircham, said he had never known a teetotaler in the Workhouse, and he was careful to explain that that was because teetotalism was an evidence of self-denial, and of the power to resist temptation, which went for success in life. He sat on the Old Age Commission for two years, and in the evidence given the question of desert was very freely discussed, and he thought all came away knowing as little at the end as they did at the beginning of any proper definition of desert. One thing was clear, that the working classes themselves, so far as he could judge from their witnesses, were likely to be more severe upon non-desert than any other class in the community. They could not solve the question of pauper relief by any generalities. Circumstances differed in each Union; each case should be taken on its merits, and thorough inquiry should be made into the case, otherwise great injustice would be done in granting out-relief. In evidence that came before the Royal Commission on the Aged Poor, it was shown that in some large Unions the relief cases were gone through at the almost incredible rate of seventy per hour. His experience showed him that that was not the way in which business was done in smaller Unions. With the case of those compelled to apply for relief in consequence of failing health and old age he had very warm sympathy, and would be sorry to see such forced into Workhouses. At the same time, he was bound to point out that there were Unions in the country in which the offer of the House in every case had been pursued with satisfaction to the Guardians, to the ratepayers, and to the poor themselves. In those cases, however, in which relief was refused, arrangements were always made that the means of the poor should be supplemented by private charity. Only by a system such as that could they establish any classification of the deserving and undeserving cases. It might be that such cases would be provided for ultimately, not by private charity, but by the State, and no one wished greater success to the efforts now being made by Mr Chamberlain to give old age pensions without imposing an intolerable burden upon the ratepayer and the taxpayer than he did. Montgomeryshire was in a very good condition as regards friendly societies, and he was of opinion that the fact of a man having a small allowance from his club should not diminish the relief which the Guardians otherwise gave him. That might be regarded as a weakness, but it was nevertheless his opinion. Then they ought to take very great care in regard to the nursing of the House. He would like to see the Workhouses looked upon much more as hospitals. When a man was in the prime of life he was earning a great deal more than he consumed, and from the point of view of £ s. d. it was a good thing to get him well as quickly as possible. Moreover, when they were giving relief in the shape of good nursing, they were pretty well certain they were not being

imposed upon, as it was exceedingly difficult to feign illness. Those were points which suggested themselves to him as of importance in this gathering. (Cheers.)

TUESDAY, 14TH SEPTEMBER.

Mr HARDING ROBERTS read the following paper, which had been prepared by Mrs Keene.

THE EDUCATION OF THE CHILDREN OF VAGRANTS.

BY MRS KEENE,

Guardian of the Poor of the Holywell Union.

WE are all of us aware that one of the most important and difficult questions of modern Poor Law work is the better education and training of the children of the poor, and whilst a great deal is being done in this direction, there is one class, namely, that of vagrants' children, which has hitherto escaped the law which provides for the compulsory education of all other children.

There is a special reason why we should turn our attention to the education of this class of children, which is, that surely the happier and better life that a proper education and training gives, will tend to cure the wandering, restless, and idle habits of this class, and so reduce their numbers in the future. It has been estimated that there are upwards of 200,000 vagrant children in the country who are totally uneducated, but this does not include the children of gipsies, the canal population, or circus people.

Then arises the question, How are we to secure the custody of these vagrant children? and, I would ask, cannot the present law be applied to attain the object in view? It would seem that there must and ought to be power to proceed against people who systematically

neglect to send their children to any school, who in fact move on from place to place purposely to prevent their children being sent to school.

If it is found on investigation that the present law is too cumbrous and slow in its operation to be applied to these nimble wanderers, an effort must be made to obtain a more speedy method of coping with this great difficulty.

We must also consider the point that, perhaps only too often, the children who accompany the vagrants are not their own, but are either bought or hired by the vagrants for their greater assistance in begging. Surely by strict investigation it could be ascertained whether they are the vagrants' own children or not. If it is found they are not, then I should suggest that they be removed from the custody of these people, and be treated as orphans by the Guardians, though this step would necessitate some alteration in the existing law.

We must next take into consideration the case of the vagrants' own children, which presents even still greater difficulties. All the sentimental feeling about parental affection and authority must be swept away when parents, who are not worthy of the name, are so wilfully negligent of their duty to their children; therefore I could wish that Guardians might have the power to detain these children and deal with them as they think best, allowing the parents to have access to the children under certain circumstances.

The first objection to this course would possibly be the expense to the ratepayers, but when we consider that these unfortunate little ones are already an expense to the State, and may become more so, I submit that the first expense, that of educating and caring for these children, would be the lesser in the end, and would prove to be money well laid out.

But to attain the object in view, it will require the united effort of Guardians throughout the whole country to bring it before the notice of our legislature.

It appears to me to be terribly sad that these little wanderers, through no fault of their own, but through the misfortune of their birth, should be denied the great advantages of education and training which are forced upon other and more fortunate children, and we can do nothing for them unless authority is granted to us to act and to give them that which their parents will never do.

DISCUSSION.

Miss EVANS (St Asaph) said they did not take advantage of the law as it stood. Surely it was criminal to take children about the country on tramp. They suffered physically and morally, and those who were with them begged from house to house. The law did not allow begging. Why did not the police take action? She would repeatedly punish the parents until they desisted. She would make them work for their living. At St Asaph there was a woman who had disposed of child after child to a blind beggar, and the Guardians had been unable to get at those children in time to save them from becoming professional beggars. If people were more careful in almsgiving the tramps would soon have to give up.

Mr BIRCHAM said that although the number of tramps who entered the casual wards in that district was not large, one could not shut one's eyes to the fact that they were going about. It would be extremely difficult to say that the ratepayers of a particular district should be saddled with the expense of the women and children just because they happened to spend a night in the Union.

Major WEBBER (Chief Constable of Flintshire) said he was not in a position to say anything of particular interest on the subject. The police had certain things to act upon, principally information and observation. The kind-heartedness of the people prevented timely warning being given to the police of the presence of tramps in a district. The tramps committed most of the undiscovered petty larcenies up and down the country.

Mr HARDING ROBERTS said that the subject was one of the greatest importance. It was hopeless to try to reform the confirmed vagrant. The road had a fascination for them, and they went on it again and again. Their hope of decreasing vagrancy lay in getting hold of the children now being dragged through the country. They ought if possible to devise some means of dealing with those children. Mr Lushington, at Bow Street Police Court, had recently laid it down that children who were going about the country with vagrants were not to be regarded as being under proper control within the meaning of the

Act of 1889. It was stretching a point, but it was quite possible that that decision would be followed in the provinces. The matter was one of national importance, and any expenditure incurred in a particular district should be borne by the Imperial Exchequer. The tramp defied the Education Acts and everything else. The majority of the children who roamed about the country with these people had been stolen or hired as a means to an end, and "the kind-heartedness of the people" was the greatest obstacle in the way of the police. The matter might very well be taken up by the Local Government Board. He moved "that in the opinion of this Conference the question of the education of the vagrant children should be taken up by the Local Government Board, and some means devised for taking proper care of the children, and bringing them up as far as possible as respectable citizens, thereby endeavouring to stamp out the cause of vagrancy."

Mr C. J. BATTERS (Holywell), in seconding, said he did not think that strictly the Poor Law authorities could take cognisance of persons who were not strictly destitute. The tramp and the destitute were entirely separate classes.

Mr M'KILLOP regretted that the police did not receive sufficient support in dealing with tramps.

The PRESIDENT said that at Wrexham they had a very large number of tramps in the course of a year. There were a few women and children, but not many. He fully agreed with the resolution drawn up by Mr Harding Roberts. It would provide a means of dealing with the children who came into the vagrant wards. They, as a Poor Law Conference, had no power over the police, and the fullest latitude must be allowed to chief constables in the matter. The police were very much hindered by the public giving money and food to the professional tramp.

Mr HUMPHREYS OWEN, M.P., said he would like to see the resolution safeguarded in some way by the insertion of words to the effect that the parents should be compelled to support the children. Nothing would please them better than to put the children on the rates.

The resolution was amended accordingly, and carried unanimously as follows :—"That in the opinion of this Conference the time has arrived when some stringent measures should be adopted authorising the Guardians to take the control and future education of the children of vagrants passing through the tramp wards of the Workhouses, the expenditure in connection therewith to be borne and paid from the National Exchequer (if and so far as it cannot be collected from the parents), and that the Local Government Board be requested to take the steps necessary to attain this object."

Mr CORNELIUS MORGAN (Newtown) read a paper on "The Amalgamation of Workhouses."

WORKHOUSE AMALGAMATION.

BY MR C. MORGAN,

Guardian of the Newtown and Llanidloes Union.

THE question of amalgamation of the four Workhouses in the county of Montgomery into one for the poor "indoor" has been before the ratepayers, of whom a large number, or majority, are in favour of such a scheme, for some time. It has also had the attention of the different Boards of Guardians, many of whom have expressed their sympathy, or approval, and that such a question should receive an expression of the opinion of this Conference "as most desirable," representing as it does a great portion of the Guardians of North Wales.

The proposition is one of economy and efficiency, and the better care of the destitute poor of the county.

The first question that presents itself to this meeting is, as to whether the amalgamation on any ground is necessary or desirable. To this I unhesitatingly say yes, and will prove my position, but find it is necessary to go back to the year 1834, when we had a Workhouse, or as it was then called *Poorhouse*, in almost every parish or village in the county, which was a den of mismanagement and pelf, very costly to the ratepayers, and very unsatisfactory to the poor. To such a magnitude of abuse had these places grown in Wales that at the last the Government of the country was compelled to pass the "Poor Law Amendment Act," but such however was the spirit of opposition to the Act that it was finally passed as a half measure, not more than the fringe of the evils then existing were touched, nevertheless many abominations were swept away.

In the county of Montgomery these Workhouse

or Poorhouses were merged into four Workhouses "amalgamated," whereas one would have been ample. And for the establishment of one Workhouse we now plead.

Let us now inquire into the necessity of one in the county of Montgomery. The population of Montgomeryshire is about 62,000 inhabitants, and fast declining. We have an indoor poor in the county of some 250 all told, of which about 70 are children, who would be much better cared for if boarded out. "Some years ago Newtown and Llanidloes had in their House some seventy or perhaps a few more children; these all now are boarded out, or nearly so, with foster parents; the result is certainly astonishing in cost, but more particularly in improvements in the children and their personal comforts, and the rescuing of these heirs to the Workhouse." Thus the number will be reduced from 250 to 180, to be treated as perhaps permanent indoor poor, therefore I say four Workhouses are totally unnecessary, and a shameful expending of public money.

Amalgamation is not new or an unworkable scheme. There are to my knowledge some Workhouses that have been amalgamated. I may point to the adjoining county of Salop. Kingsland is now ornamented with perhaps one of the best schools in England. Again, as a further example take the gaol at Montgomery, built at a fabulous cost, maintained at a great cost, with a useless staff of officers, which by arrangement has been demolished. This gaol had possibly one, two, or three prisoners incarcerated within its walls; let me ask if that gaol was necessary, and who now suffers from its demolition?

EXTENT OF THE SCHEME OF AMALGAMATION.

Many people are not fully aware to what extent it is intended to carry the same, and how it will affect the four Unions of the county. The answer is plain and

simple, as the Unions will be managed exactly as they are now managed by their own ratepayers. Not one penny will be asked from one Union by another; the only difference that can be made will be a reduction of the costs of their own Workhouse, as by other Boards of Guardians paying a part of the established charges or proportionate payments. Thus, say that Forden will be the House ultimately selected as the County House, say also they will have 60 inmates, Newtown and Llanidloes 60, then their payments will be the same, Llanfyllin 55 inmates, and Machynlleth 30. Forden and Newtown will pay the same, Llanfyllin less, and Machynlleth half of Forden or Newtown; thus the establishment charge will be borne *pro rata* by the whole county.

DECREASING POPULATION, ALSO PAUPERISM.

It is a well-known fact that the population of Montgomeryshire is steadily declining, and no sane person will prophesy that for the next century or two there will be any increase. Pauperism is fast dying out (education benefits society), and old-age pensions will have their effect upon the people.

A few years ago we had housed in Newtown and Llanidloes Workhouse 180 or nearly 200 people; to-day we have some 60 only, and has been lower, at a cost of about 9s. per head per week. I wish to state that the whole cost of the established charges are equal to 9s. per head per week. I may point out to the larger ratepayers of the county, the farming class, that although the produce of the land has been much reduced in value by other markets or competition, the Workhouse charges are the same, remain the same—sacred and untouched. It is not beyond the reach of imagination or probability to find them largely increased.

OFFICERS' PENSIONS.

Some day you may have a master at £100 a year salary, and an ex-master as well with a pension of £66. 13s. 4d., which he is clearly entitled to, and will receive; then you will pay in the whole £166. 13s. 4d. for master and ex-master; all other officers are alike, and will have the double demand of the pound of flesh—"two-thirds" of their salaries. This must be paid, and cannot be contracted out by the Boards of Guardians. Indeed, I know that one Workhouse has a master and two or three ex-masters living, and if there were a dozen such officers all will in future come under the operation of the Act, and be benefited thereby.

ANOTHER CHARGE UPON ESTABLISHMENT CHARGES.

SOME OPPOSITION TO THE SCHEME.

Some gentlemen have pointed out the difficulty of removal to the Workhouse. Surely they cannot be serious, since Forden and Caersws Houses are much in the same position, having the railway running within a few yards of their door. Llanfyllin, Welshpool, Llanidloes, and Newtown and all villages are within easy distances by rail to these Workhouses. Again, the difficulty of dealing with the tramp appears to raise an insurmountable barrier. For my part, I believe this difficulty will vanish into the air. The trade of the tramp is rapidly leaving us. (See returns from various Workhouses.) Besides, are the ratepayers of the county to keep up a system of supporting these unfortunate but idle people. Let the police deal with them, and a few years of this supervision will do a grand work by causing tramping as a trade to cease, or to be vastly diminished.

CLASSIFICATION.

The Act is very strong on this point, insisting upon strict compliance with the Consolidated Order,

which in large Workhouses can be carried out to the letter, but in small or rural Workhouses, as the Guardians well know, classification is impossible, and almost a farce.

The worn-out man feels degraded by having to associate or domicile with people whose lives have been spent in idling, shame, and vagabondism.

There is nothing that the poor so much dread as the associations in the Workhouse. In larger Workhouses this is vastly avoided.

I do not think it necessary to tabulate figures, as balance-sheets are sent out twice a year and presented to you, and H.M.I. Reports are very frequent, and from which you will gather much information that will convince you of the present foolish, wicked, and extravagant spending of the ratepayers' hard-earned money, and that the same system should be stamped out, and a saving effected to the county of some twelve to fifteen hundred pounds per annum.

It will be observed that the paper that has been read refers principally to Montgomeryshire, although the Conference will do well in considering and investigating other Workhouses in North Wales.

DISCUSSION.

The Rev. T. H. HUGHES (Newtown) said that the subject might not be thought to interest them all, but he hoped it would receive their unbiassed consideration. The paper dealt with an apparent gross waste of public money—an admitted evil, of having four large establishments when one would suffice.

Mr M'KILLOP said it seemed as though it would be a good thing for the amalgamation to take place in the cases put before them in the paper, but he did not see how the Conference could move in the matter.

Mr HUMPHREYS OWEN, M.P., said the matter was one which should entirely depend upon the voice of the people in the districts concerned. One great objection which the poor had to going into the Workhouse was that it removed them such a distance from their friends. In a matter of that kind they must be tender with popular feeling. They could not take a man or woman against their will, and

more or less shut them up for their own convenience, without showing some strong reason, or with the consent of the people themselves. At all events he thought the matter should be discussed, and brought home more than it had been to the classes it affected. After the matter had been fully discussed by the electors of the different Boards of Guardians, and if those who were on the outer-sides of the county—Machynlleth at one end and Llanfyllin on the other—did not object to their Workhouses being closed and their aged poor being sent either to Caersws or Forden, he thought the conclusions arrived at should have free scope, but until that had been done he did not think it would be wise for that Conference to pass a resolution on the matter. The subject was one that must be well considered; it was, however, yet in the stage of discussion, and not in a stage of action.

Mr THOMAS (Bangor) said he was sorry to disagree with the reader of the paper and Mr M'Killop. He was against the amalgamation of Workhouses.

Mr PRINCE (Holywell) said that what would suit one district would not suit another, and they must consider the requirements of each district.

Mr JONES (Bala) said the matter must not be looked at merely from a pecuniary point of view.

Mr ROBERTS suggested that the question of classification of Workhouses ought to be looked at more than amalgamation. Let them consider whether the existing Workhouses could be adapted for certain classes of inmates.

The Rev. T. H. HUGHES proposed—"That the principle of amalgamation is a sound one, and the Conference leaves each county to work it out in its own way, after fully discussing the matter with the ratepayers."

The PRESIDENT—I do not know that that will do much good.

Mr HUGHES—It will be simply committing the Conference to the principle.

Mr MORGAN rose.

The PRESIDENT—Do you second Mr Hughes?

Mr MORGAN—No, sir.

The proposition therefore fell through for the want of a seconder.

The CHAIRMAN said the matter was very much one of local opinion, and the Conference as a Conference could not interfere in it. There would be considerable difficulty in taking paupers from one Union to another, and he was not sure that they had the power to do so. It was a matter in which the feelings of the poor as well as the interests of the ratepayers should be studied. He did not think any case had been made out for it such as to induce the Conference to express any opinion upon it.

Mr MORGAN thanked the Conference for considering the subject.

Mr HARDING ROBERTS said he claimed the privilege of moving a vote of thanks to the President. As Hon. Secretary of the Conference he fully appreciated Captain Griffith-Boscawen's kindness in

taking the chair. His difficulties in getting up the Conference were materially lessened when he consented to preside.

The vote of thanks having been carried with acclamation,

The PRESIDENT said he was only too glad to help Mr Harding Roberts, as nobody knew the work there was in getting up a Conference of that kind. There had been a good attendance, and he hoped it would be still better next year. He proposed a vote of thanks to Mr Harding Roberts for his services as Hon. Secretary.

Mr HUGH THOMAS seconded, and the proposition having been cordially endorsed by the meeting,

Mr HARDING ROBERTS said he felt his services had been somewhat rewarded by the good feeling expressed, and by the large attendance. They had fourteen Unions out of the twenty in the area of the Conference represented; subscriptions had been received from three of the Unions not represented there, and letters of apology had been received, so that there were only two Unions not represented or who had not sent a subscription.

The proceedings terminated with a hearty vote of thanks to Mr Humphreys Owen, M.P., for his attendance at the Conference.

North-Western District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR THE
COUNTIES OF CHESHIRE AND LANCASHIRE, HELD
AT BLACKPOOL, ON FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, 24TH
AND 25TH SEPTEMBER 1897.

President.—Rt. Hon. SIR JOHN HIBBERT, K.C.B.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference.

* Guardians specially delegated by their Boards.

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE—

- *Fletcher, John (Chairman).
- *Parkinson, M. } (Vice-Chairmen).
- *Pownall, J. }
- *Seymour, B. (Clerk).

BARTON-UPON-IRWELL—

- *Rawson, Miss.
- *Jones, Rev. K. L., M.A.
- *Yates, Henry.
- *Whitworth, J. W. (Clerk).

BARROW-IN-FURNESS—

- *M'Millan, Rev. J.
- *Ormandy, W.
- Robinson, J.
- *Taylor, F. (Clerk).

BIRKENHEAD—

- *Denman, E. (Chairman).
- *Martin, Dr (Vice-Chairman).
- *Abraham, Mrs.
- *Carter, J. (Clerk).

BLACKBURN—

- *Hoyle, James (Vice-Chairman).
- *Knowles, Henry.
- *Duckworth, J. R.
- *Radcliffe, Robt. C. (Clerk).

BOLTON—

- *Watkinson, J. W. (Chairman).
- *Kearsley, Mr.
- *Shippobottom, Mr.
- *Swan, Mrs.
- Ward, Mr.
- Haslam, Mrs.
- Howard, Mrs.
- *Cooper, H. J. (Assistant Clerk).

BUCKLOW—

- *Armitage, Mrs.
- *Atkinson, Miss.
- Lee, Miss.
- *Fullerton, H., J.P.
- *Garstang, Dr.
- Higham, A. M.
- Davies, W.
- Clare, Geo., J.P.
- *Leigh, George (Clerk).

BURNLEY—

- *Bibby, James.
- *Boothman, William.
- *Race, Joseph.
- Greenwood, S.
- Varley, J.
- *Horn, J. S. (Clerk).

Unions represented at the Conference—*continued*.

BURY—

- *Frith, S., J.P. (Chairman).
- *Roberts, Mrs.
Brooks, Joseph.
Peel, Roger.
- *Isherwood, James (Clerk).

CHORLEY—

- *Burwell, W. W. (Chairman).
- *Dickinson, Henry (Vice-Chairman).
- *Ascroft, John.
- *Stanton, B. (Clerk).

CHORLTON—

- *Rhodes, Dr J. M. (Chairman).
- *Tomlinson, C. L. (Vice-Chairman).
- *Pankhurst, Mrs.
- *Sale, Mrs.
Sarpant, Mr.
Massey, Mrs.
- *Bloomfield, D. S. (Clerk).

FYLDE—

- *Hodgson, W. S. (Chairman).
- *Hodgson, W. (Vice-Chairman).
- *Ashworth, Mrs.
- *Baxter, Mrs.

GARSTANG—

- *Whittaker, George (Chairman).
- *Huntington, E. (Vice-Chairman).
- *King, Alf.
- *Ibison, Robert.

HASLINGDEN—

- *Worsley, Nicholas (Chairman).
- *Ramsbottom, William.
- *Baxter, William.
Higham, Miss A.
- *Hay, James K. (Clerk).

LANCASTER—

- *Royds, Rev. C. Twemlow (Chairman).
- *Barrow, Mrs.
- *Willis, Miss.
- *Crookall, Lawrence.
- *Eunion, Joseph (Clerk).

LEEK—

- *Sheldon, John P., J.P. (Chairman).
- *Heath, Ralph.
- *Warren, George.
- *Shaw, Joseph.

LEIGH—

- Clegg, R. J., J.P. (Chairman).
- *Bennett, Mrs.
- *Frankland, Mr.
- *Crippin, Mr.
O'Neill, Rev. F.
Greenough, Richard.
- Laycock, Mr.
- Bate, Mr.
- Arnott, Mr.
- Cocher, Mr.
- *Williams, E. (Clerk).

LIVERPOOL—

- *Byrne, John (Chairman).
- *Moss, Joseph.
- *Hagger, H. J. (Clerk).

MACCLESFIELD—

- *Bridge, Rev. T. (Chairman).
- *Russell, Mrs.
Murgatroyd, Mrs.
- *Wright, John.
- *May, J. F. (Clerk).

MANCHESTER—

- *Fisher, G. F., J.P. (Chairman).
- *Hyland, Mrs.
- *Laycock, James.
Ruddin, T. Q.
- *Macdonald, Geo. (Clerk).

NANTWICH—

- *Edwards, John (Vice-Chairman).
- *Leah, Jesse.
- *Bebbington, John.
- *Speakman, Charles (Clerk).

NORTHWICH—

- Boosey, William } (Vice-Chairmen).
- Hardie, William }

ORMSKIRK—

- *Travis, G. F. } (Vice-Chairmen).
- *Underwood, Henry }
- *Tolmê, Mrs.
Holland, Mrs.
- Hollins, Miss.
- *Dickinson, A. (Clerk).

PRESCOT—

- *Davies, G. (Chairman).
- *Sylvester, Rev. S. A. K.
- *Lowe, W.
Kenwright, G.
- *Mann, A. F. (Clerk).

Unions represented at the Conference—*continued*.

PRESTON—

- *Bowen, Mrs.
- *Smith, Miss.
- *Scholes, Rev. W.
Pye, W.
- *Clarke, Jas. (Clerk).

PRESTWICH—

- *Briggs, Thos., J. P.
- *Usher, Mrs.
- *Atherton, Mr.
- *Ogden, E. W. (Clerk).

ROCHDALE—

- *Worth, John T. (Chairman).
- *Wadsworth, Henry (Vice-Chairman).
- *Parker, John.
- *Leach, R. A. (Clerk).

RUNCORN—

- *Lewis, Thomas.
- *Chadwick, J. B.
- *Jones, J. L.
Moseley-Williams, J.
- *Ashton, John (Clerk).

SALFORD—

- *Hill, Samuel (Chairman).
- Simcock, A. (Vice-Chairman).
- *Hibbert, J. E.
- *Hammersley, Isaac.
- *Byrne, J. J.
- *Townson, F. (Clerk).

STOCKPORT—

- *Brady, W. H. (Chairman).
- *Brownwood, H.
- *Edwards, A. L.

TOXTETH PARK—

- *Jennings, William (Chairman).
- *Killip, R.
- *Mather, R.
Dodson, R. S.
- *Moulding, J. (Clerk).

ULVERSTON—

- *Hodgson, Jas., J. P. (Vice-Chairman).
- *Dean, C. W. (Clerk).

WARRINGTON—

- *Pilling, Geo. (Chairman).
- *Knowles, J. W. } (Vice-Chairmen).
- *Patterson, Dr }
- *Clay, Mrs.
- *Sutton, J. C. (Clerk).

WEST DERBY—

- *Brewster, W. R. (Chairman).
- *Mead, G. L.
- *Houlding, J., J. P.
- *Bell, J.
Cripps, Miss.
- *Cleaver, H. P. (Clerk).

WIGAN—

- *Ball, Edward (Chairman).
- *Winstanley, Joseph.
- *Darlington, Henry.
- *Ackerley, Henry (Clerk).

WIRRAL—

- *Knowles, W. (Chairman).
- *Morris, Chas. (Vice-Chairman).
- *Latham, H. A.
Hodgson, Mrs.
- Oakshott, Mrs.
- *Ollive, J. E. S. (Clerk).

VISITORS.

- | | | |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Jenner-Fust, H. | { | Local Govern-
ment Board
Inspectors. |
| Moorsom, W. M. | | |
| Campion, The Hon. Mrs. | | |
| Wilbraham, Mrs. | | |
| Grafton, Miss, Heysham. | | |
| Haworth, Mrs, Blackburn. | | |

- Beamish, T. G., Coventry.
- Newell, J., Keighley.
- Hallowell, Henry, Todmorden.
- Walton, Henry, Todmorden.
- Parker, Mrs, Glossop.
- Fitzsimmons, Miss, Manchester.
- Carnell, Geo. F., Sevenoaks.

Unions in the two Counties not represented :—Clitheroe, Oldham, Chester, Congleton, Tarvin, and Lunesdale.

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 FRIDAY, 24TH SEPTEMBER.

In welcoming the Conference to Blackpool, the Mayor remarked there was much that wanted altering in Poor Law matters. He thought there was far too much done in the way of separating man and wife in their old age when they sought the shelter of the Poor Law.

Sir JOHN HIBBERT returned thanks on behalf of the Conference, and referring to the separation of old couples, he said there were two sides to the question. He had heard of cases where the old man and the old woman preferred to be separated rather than united. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) If they desired to be together, efforts ought to be made for that purpose; the law allowed that old couples should pass the last period of their lives together.

Mr H. J. HAGGER (Liverpool, the Hon. Sec.) read letters of regret for non-attendance from the Right Hon. H. Chaplin, President of the Local Government Board; Sir Hugh Owen, Permanent Secretary of the Board; Miss Mason, and others.

The acoustic properties of the room where the meeting was held were very indifferent, many of the speakers being almost inaudible. Sir JOHN HIBBERT expressed the hope that the Town Hall would be available for the next Conference at Blackpool.

The PRESIDENT said he rose for the twenty-third time to address that Conference, and he must first pay a tribute to the memory of the late Mr Thomas Schofield, of Rochdale, who never missed one of their Conferences, and on several occasions took the chair temporarily. They had lately been celebrating the Diamond Jubilee of their respected and beloved Queen, and it would not be out of place, therefore, on that occasion to allude to the great changes which had taken place in the country during the sixty years since Her

Majesty ascended the throne. Everything had been widened and deepened during the last sixty years in the representation of the people, in local government, in the better habits of the people, in the increase of wealth and prosperity. If progress had been made in these directions, it had been made no less in the administration of the Poor Law. (Hear, hear.) The Queen came to the throne about three years after the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. That Act was passed owing to the great increase of pauperism throughout the country, owing to the way in which the Poor Law was being administered in town and country. Had it gone on without reform, there was no doubt that there would have been very few people left who would not have become pauperised by the maladministration of those times. (Hear, hear.) If there was any department which had shown greater progress than another, it was the treatment of the sick poor and the child pauper. (Hear, hear.) The infirmaries of 1837 were scarcely worthy of the name of infirmaries, except a few in the large towns ; but now throughout the country, in all large and populous districts, they had most magnificent infirmaries for the treatment of the sick pauper. These institutions had been of the greatest advantage to the country, because the sooner and the better they could treat the sick pauper, the sooner would they be self-dependent again. (Hear, hear.) If they looked at the way poor children were treated in former times in the workhouses of the country, and at the way they were treated now, they would all be thankful at the advance which had been made. We now had district schools, separate workhouses, cottage homes, training homes, scattered homes, training ships, boarding out, industrial training in workhouses, and they had also societies for looking after the children after they had left the care of the Guardians—societies in which the women of the country took a prominent part. That had all been done without breaking down the principles of the Act of 1834, and though year by year amendments had been made in various directions, those amendments and the way the laws were administered were in harmony with the humane feeling of the people of the country. (Hear, hear.) He had a strong opinion about administration. A strict administration was for the benefit of the country. He did not think that it was the part of Guardians to give doles of money merely out of sympathy. What they had to do was to administer relief to the indigent, and by the mode of administration to build up a self-reliant people. That was one of the best aims the Guardians could have. It was desirable from time to time to take stock, and see whether they were advancing or going backwards. He found that on the 1st of January last there was a decrease of paupers of all classes as compared with the previous January of 3,782, a very small decrease, considering the prosperous state of the country, the total number of paupers of all classes being 836,674, of whom 88,000 were insane, 6,000 vagrants, 506,124 adult males and females, and 230,406 children under sixteen years, or

27.2 per 1,000, as compared with 49 per 1,000 in 1837. He did not suppose that they could very much alter the habits of adult males and females, although they might do something by strict administration, but with the children they had a chance of instilling into them principles of thrift and self-dependence. He was glad to think the Guardians of the country had that in their minds in the wonderfully generous provision they made for the education of pauper children. Looking at the distribution of pauperism, he found that the district with the lowest proportion was that covered by the Conference, viz., the North-Western District, which was 19.8. Compared with the South-Western District, which was by far the most pauperised—where the figure was 40.7—they had much to be thankful for, both on account of the thrift of their people and the administration of the Guardians. Looking at the counties, they found that Lancashire had 19.6 paupers per 1,000, which was slightly better than the average of the North-Western District. Norfolk had the most paupers of any county—46 per 1,000—and Dorset nearly as many. Middlesex had the fewest paupers—18.4 per 1,000—the West Riding of Yorkshire having 18.6, and Lancashire 19.6. He considered they ought to be dissatisfied with the small decrease in the pauperism which had taken place, especially when they considered the prosperous state of the country during last year. There had been an unusual period of prosperity. They judged of that from the state of the revenue, which produced last year more than it had ever done before; they looked also at the very large increase in the imports and exports, and also at the state of employment in the country during the past year. No doubt there might have been some causes to prevent a larger decrease, such as strikes in some industries, and other causes of which he was not aware; but, generally, they found from the statistics of the *Labour Gazette* that the state of employment had been good. If they were to take the mean number of paupers relieved this year and in 1837, and compare them, they would find that instead of having 814,000 paupers, they would now have had 1,926,000 paupers, so that it was evident what an advance had been made during that period, and in the same way there had been a great decrease in the number of able-bodied paupers; in many workhouses, indeed, there were hardly any paupers of that character. At the same time he could not help expressing his dissatisfaction that there had not been a greater decrease of pauperism considering the very prosperous times. The Report of the Poor Law Commissioners in 1834 contained some very strong and very true statements in regard to the importance of strict administration of relief. He thought that there was now no desire on the part of Guardians generally to render the lot of the pauper preferable to that of the independent working class. There was another thing to which he thought it right to direct their attention, the increase of pauper lunatics. It was a very serious matter. The Report of the Lunacy Commissioners did not throw very much light

on the increase. The Guardians desired to have lunatics treated in the asylums, and that was the great object to be aimed at. He thought if some of those chronic lunatics and some of the imbeciles were taken out of the asylums where they filled a very large space, and made room for curable cases, a very great benefit would accrue to the respective counties. (Hear, hear.) On behalf of the County Councils Associations he this year headed a deputation to Mr Chaplin, asking him to allow 4s. a head to be paid to the Guardians for chronic lunatics and imbeciles who were treated in the workhouses under proper regulations and proper administration. He (Sir John Hibbert) was asked by Mr Chaplin to prepare a scheme, and Mr Chaplin was very willing to consider the subject, with a view to seeing whether legislation could be brought in for effecting that purpose. That would very largely take off the pressure upon the asylums. They were now building in Lancashire their fifth asylum; they were going to spend half a million of money, and if anything could be done to lessen the pressure, it would benefit the ratepayers of the whole county. During the past year there had been an increase in the cost of relief, but it had gone in a direction they could all approve, viz., the improvement of the workhouses, the sick wards, and particularly of the workhouses. Mr Jenner Fust had issued his Annual Return of Pauperism in Lancashire and Cheshire, and they were much indebted to that gentleman for the care he took in preparing the statistics. (Hear, hear.) From that Report it appeared that of the thirty Unions in Lancashire, twenty-two were in a worse position on the 1st January 1897 than the average of the preceding five years, and only eight were better. The total number of paupers in Lancashire on 1st January 1897 was 74,478, and the average for the five years 70,665, or an increase of 3,813 for the whole of the county. Taking the proportion of paupers to the population, the figure had been raised from 1 in 56 for the five years to 1 in 53, therefore the proportion was worse last January than the average of the previous five years. Of the thirty Unions, eleven had a worse proportion, and nineteen had a better proportion of paupers to population. The worst proportion was Liverpool with 1 to 21, the average for the county being 1 to 53; Manchester was 1 to 32, and Prescott 1 to 34, and he could not understand why Prescott should show so badly. In Cheshire the proportion was 1 to 51. Bucklow was the best proportion, with Wirral second, and Chester and Nantwich the worst. With regard to nursing in workhouses, he was glad to welcome the new order of the Local Government Board forbidding the employment of pauper nurses. It was a step in advance which they would have to pay for, and he hoped in time it would repay itself. They were told that in small Unions the number of sick patients were so very few that it was not worth while to employ a paid trained nurse, but in such cases why should they not employ a matron who was also a trained nurse? (Hear, hear.) That would obviate a difficulty in the smaller Unions which was not felt in the

larger ones. He had that very day received a letter from Miss Louisa Twining, one of the oldest Poor Law workers, saying that trained nurses were required throughout the whole country. Who could say the good work that the women had done in that direction during the past thirty years? (Cheers.) He congratulated the Guardians upon their work, and said it was a proud thing that the country could produce a noble band of men who gave themselves up to make the lot of the poor less hard, and in that remark he included of course the lady Guardians. (Cheers.)

Mrs SALE then read the following paper :—

THE INCREASED POWERS OF DETENTION BY GUARDIANS OF (1) FEEBLE-MINDED CHILDREN ; (2) ORPHANS.

BY MRS SALE,

A Member of the Chorlton Board of Guardians.

It was only after I was thoughtless enough to promise at the Preliminary Conference that in conjunction with my colleague Mrs Pankhurst, who has selected for her subject "Increased Powers of Detention of (1) Children of Degraded Parents ; (2) Ins-and-Outs," I would read a paper on "Increased Powers of Detention of Feeble-Minded Children and Orphans," that I realised the importance of the undertaking, and I must ask for the indulgence of the Conference in view of my shortcomings.

In the first place, let us clearly understand what we mean by "feeble-minded." If by such a term we mean those who could not be certified as persons of "unsound mind," but only what some of us are pleased to term "a little weak" or "silly," then our dilemma commences, for I am absolutely certain that the Legislature will never pass an Act to give to Guardians a power that would enable them materially to interfere with the liberty of the subject. The more one thinks about this the more one is convinced that the difficulties of the situation are insuperable. Who is to define

a feeble-minded child or person, and at the same time say that such child or person is not of unsound mind. Miss Agatha Stacey, in a paper read at the North-Western Conference in 1893, on "Suggestions for the Care of Semi-Imbecile Women and Girls," said that she supposed the word "semi-imbecile" was meant to include the feeble-minded, and then she goes on to say that such are "those whom the doctor does not consider sufficiently irresponsible to be detained in the Workhouse and to be placed in the Imbecile Ward, and yet they are silly and stupid, and cannot get through a day's work when left to themselves." I don't think there is anybody here who believes for a moment that we as Guardians will ever get powers to detain this class, and yet it is pitiful to think that this is the class which is a constant source of anxiety and trouble to us.

Miss Clifford, at the West Midland Conference in May 1891, in the course of a paper read by her, said, in speaking of the better care of semi-imbecile women, "she did not think it would be advisable to grant certificates for feeble minds when it would be a case of shutting up in Lunatic Asylums." If, on the other hand, we mean by feeble-minded children, children of unsound mind, then indeed we have a mighty field to labour in. I believe that under the Lunacy Act we have at present the necessary power to detain these children. Why do we desire to detain them? To educate them where possible, and by educating them to give them an opportunity of earning their own livelihood.

The Royal Commissioners on the Blind, Deaf and Dumb, and Imbeciles recommended, *inter alia*, "that educable imbecile children should not be left for any time in Workhouse or Lunatic Asylum;" and in the 18th Annual Report of the Indiana School for Feeble-Minded Youth, sent to my friend Mrs Pankhurst by Mr Johnson the Superintendent (who by the

way is a Manchester man), the following passages occur :—

“The experience of many years has abundantly confirmed us in the opinion that the vast majority of our inmates should here find their permanent home. We are satisfied that no money expended by the State is used more wisely than what is spent in the care of the feeble-minded, that every dollar expended in their custodial care by the present generation means many dollars saved by the next. We are also convinced that under the present system of permanent care a reasonable number of our inmates are made almost, if not quite, self-supporting with us, where their labour can be utilised in the care of the most dependent, while if these same inmates were dismissed from our controlling care, they would be not only useless but mischievous outside.”

Mr Johnson, I may say, is a man of vast experience, and has an extensive knowledge of the State Schools of America for the care of feeble-minded youth. The Indiana School has upwards of 500 patients, and by reason of its size classification is most satisfactorily carried out. In America the States provide these schools ; but here, if it is to be done, we must do it for ourselves, and we can by combination do it very easily. Already we have an object-lesson in the action of the Chorlton and Manchester Boards. They, with the approval of the Local Government Board, who have issued a Special Order under Section 8 of the Poor Law Act, 1879, have appointed a Joint Committee, who intend to provide an asylum or institution where such cases as those we have under consideration will be provided for. Of course it is not given to every Union to have the population or the rateable value of the places I have named, but it is possible for every Union in the country to have an interest in such an institution. As it is beyond the means of most Unions to make on their own account adequate accommoda-

tion for the children of feeble mind, I would most strongly urge that Unions should combine for the purpose of providing, apart from the Workhouse, institutions in various parts of the country for the education of this class. By combination, and it is only by combination, except we go to the County Councils, that Guardians can do anything of real value; that we can secure, at the lowest possible cost to the ratepayers of our respective districts, the educational advantages so necessary for these poor children. If the County Council will take up the work and provide the Schools and Homes, then, no doubt, children whose parents would never dream of accepting "relief" at the hands of the "Poor Law," but who nevertheless are not in a position to make proper provision, and who, in consequence, might be said to neglect their feeble-minded children, might also be reached.

The institutions such as I advocate contribute to a large extent to their own support. In the one I speak of, for instance, everything the children wear, with the exception of hosiery, hats and caps, and knitted underwear, is made on the premises. Carpentry and wood work are taught; mattresses are made; shoemaking is not the least profitable of the trades; and the engineering department, in which the labour is almost wholly supplied by the boys, cares for the heating, lighting (electric), water supply and sewerage; whilst the kitchen garden and farm department, worked, I need hardly say, also by the boys, is responsible for the supply of a considerable quantity of food stuffs.

Think for a moment of the condition of the respectable working-man who has the misfortune to number in his family a feeble-minded child. Can he afford to educate such child? No, certainly not. Such a thing is altogether beyond his means. Can he send the child to the Public Elementary School? No, they would not have the child. What then is there for him

to do? What institution other than the Workhouse can he find a place in? None. When we get such a child, as we invariably do, what do we as Guardians do with him? Do we place him in a school where efforts are made to improve his mental condition and some useful occupation taught him, or do we allow him to vegetate in the Imbecile Wards? To be perfectly candid, are we honestly, as Guardians of the Poor, elected to watch over the interests of the poor, doing our duty as Christian men and women to all such children who come under our care? In how many of the 650 Unions of the country is any provision whatever made for their education, and I wonder if there is one of the 650 Workhouses where one or more of the “feeble-minded” cannot be found? We have, I think, all seen them. If not, ask your master and matron, or the schoolmaster or schoolmistress, and you will very soon have pointed out the child, boy or girl, who is just a little bit “silly.”

Ladies and gentlemen, I have not bothered you with statistics. I have plenty, but the facts of the case are plain, and we know them well. As I said before, in this we have a glorious field of labour which can be made easy by combination.

I ought not to omit to mention that I have received a letter from the Guardians of the Leigh Union, as follows :—

LEIGH UNION OFFICES,
26th July 1897.

DEAR MADAM,

HOMES FOR FEEBLE-MINDED.

I am directed to forward to you the following extract from the Minutes of the Guardians of this Union :—

“The circular letter received from the Secretary to the Women’s Guardians Association containing the following resolution was adopted—

“‘That it is most desirable that Boards of Guardians should combine to build Homes for pauper sane epileptics, and to support Homes for the feeble-minded which may exist in the counties to which they belong.’”

“Resolved, that this Committee approve of the objects of the circular of the Women’s Guardians Association, and recommend the Board to co-operate with other Boards in adopting any practical scheme for providing Homes for epileptic and imbecile paupers.

“Resolved that a copy of the above resolution be forwarded to the Secretary of the Women’s Guardians Association, and to Mrs Pankhurst and Mrs Sale, Guardians of the Chorlton Union, with a view to the two last-named ladies introducing the question in their papers on ‘Increased Powers of Detention for all Classes, but specially for Feeble-Minded Children,’ to be read at the next North-Western Poor Law Conference.”—I am, Madam, yours faithfully,

E. WILLIAMS, *Clerk.*

I have not touched on the question of provision for sane epileptics, as this is a subject beyond the scope of my paper.

ORPHAN CHILDREN.

When I turn to the orphan children my task is much easier, for whatever our opinions may be as to the desirability or otherwise of Guardians making proper provision for the care and education of feeble-minded children, I think we shall be unanimous in concluding that Guardians should have power to detain the orphans. Who has not met the anxious friend or relative who, when the child chargeable in the Workhouse Schools for many years is arriving at a wage-earning age, develops a love for that child that can only be assuaged by the child taking up his residence with him. This is a case of such ordinary occurrence that we are all on a bowing acquaintance with it. In fact we are something more than acquaintances, we so often meet. Another type I have had experience of even within the last few days is as follows. A mother (*sic*) who some years ago on no less than twenty-four different occasions dragged her little children with her into our Workhouse, was lost sight of. Two of the children found their way into a charitable institution, and died. The eldest girl, now nineteen, was last week confined in our maternity wards of an illegitimate child. A boy aged fourteen or fifteen is chargeable

to the Guardians. This boy has been to the fishery trade at Grimsby, and returned desiring to go on a training ship with a view to joining the navy. The mother by some means has found out that we have the boy, and she threatens us with all sorts of pains and penalties if we do not hand him over to her so that she can draw his wages from a rope-walk where she is anxious he should get work. This type of case, too, I suppose you have often met before.

Mr Hagger, at the North-Western Poor Law Conference at Macclesfield in October 1884, when reading a paper on the control of Guardians with respect to neglected and deserted children, very graphically describes the difficulties we every day have to face. He says :—

“ By far the most frequently recurring trouble in the case of both neglected and deserted children arises from the fact that however ready the parents may be to abandon their control while the children are young and helpless, they will take the utmost trouble to resume it as soon as the children are in a position to give them any assistance. All who are accustomed to watch the career of the young people who go out from our Workhouse or District School know from sad experience how often it happens that a child's future, just as it is beginning to show signs of promise, is hopelessly ruined by the interference of a drunken or dissolute parent.”

Substitute the word “ relatives ” for “ parents,” and the above remark will apply to many of our orphan children. Knowing these things, one does not wonder that previous Conferences have passed resolutions to the effect that it is desirable that the powers of Boards of Guardians for the protection of pauper children should be extended. To-day the resolutions passed at these Conferences are bearing fruit, for we find that at the close of the last session of Parliament a Bill, backed by Mr Ernest Flower, Sir Henry Bemrose,

Mr Davitt, Mr Hazell, Mr William Jones, and Mr Harry Samuel, to extend and amend the provisions of the Poor Law Act, 1889, was introduced, which provides :—

(1.) Where a child is maintained by the Guardians of a Union and is an orphan, or the Guardians are of opinion that by reason of character, mental deficiency, habits or mode of life, the parent of such child is unfitted to have the control of it, the Guardians may at any time resolve that such child shall be under the control of the Guardians until it reaches the age of eighteen years, and thereupon until the child reaches that age all the powers and rights of such parents in respect of that child shall, subject as in this Act mentioned, rest in the Guardians.

(2.) Guardians shall have power to retain control of boys as well as of girls until the age of eighteen years, provided that a boy under the control of the Guardians at the date of the passing of this Act shall not be detained by them under such control after the age of sixteen without his written consent.

(3.) When a boy or girl under the control of the Guardians has reached the age of eighteen, such boy or girl may consent in writing that the provisions of Section 1 of the Poor Law Act, 1889, shall continue to apply to such boy or girl till the age of twenty-one is reached, and thereupon these provisions shall continue to apply accordingly till such boy or girl has reached the age of twenty-one years.

(4.) Any person who knowingly assists, directly or indirectly, a child under the control of the Guardians to escape from the place where the child is under such control, or directly or indirectly induces such child so to escape, or knowingly harbours or conceals a child who has so escaped, or prevents him from returning to such place as aforesaid, shall be liable on summary conviction to a penalty not exceeding £20.

This Bill, ladies and gentlemen, is, I think, a most important step in the direction we are desirous of going, and I sincerely hope that next session it will become an Act. It is supported by every shade of opinion in the House, and its progress will be considerably assisted if we can see our way at this important gathering of Guardians, having an intimate and practical knowledge of the difficulties of dealing satisfactorily with children under the present condition of the law, to petition the House of Commons in its favour. I would go further, and suggest that the President of the Local Government Board should be asked to take the Bill under his wing and bring it in as a Government measure. I do not think that Guardians can have too much power in dealing with the little children, whose only friends in many many cases are the oftentimes much-abused Guardians of the Poor.

Mrs PANKHURST then read the following Paper :—

INCREASED POWERS OF DETENTION FOR CHILDREN OF DEGRADED PARENTS AND “INS-AND-OUTS.”

BY MRS PANKHURST,

Member of the Chorlton Board of Guardians.

ALL engaged in Poor Law administration as well as in educational and social work find themselves constantly impeded by the inadequacy of the existing law relative to children.

In Poor Law work especially it is the power of detention that for the good of the child needs improvement and extension. The just and necessary protection of the life and future of the child demands that it should have fit conditions for securing (1) health, (2)

education, (3) technical teaching and training, (4) moral discipline, (5) a start in life. Deprive the child of these necessary conditions, and how is it to live an honest and useful life! The state of our gaols, work-houses, lunatic asylums, and reformatories gives the answer.

When, therefore, the parent of the child is unfit or unable to protect and secure the child the things necessary to its welfare, it is the manifest duty of society, for its own sake as well as for that of the child, to undertake the office of guardian. Here the interests of the community and the interests of the child are identical.

On the basis of this principle, when the rights of the child are denied or nullified by the conduct or condition of the parent, then the power of the parent must yield to the power of the State. Accordingly, when the State, for these sufficient reasons, becomes guardian in place of the parent, the main questions which arise are—

(1.) The extent of the power to be granted to the State.

(2.) The authority to exercise that power.

(3.) The mode in which it is to be exercised.

It is now recognised by all civilised nations that it is necessary for the State to intervene and suspend or cancel parental power when by the evil behaviour or inability of the parent the child is endangered in its health, safety, industrial or moral well-being. In France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Switzerland, and the United States, not to mention other countries, legislation now exists having for its object child protection and child-saving in cases where parental power has for defined causes failed either by inability or evil conduct on the part of the parent to serve the welfare of the child.

The principle of such legislation is pointedly expressed in the French law, which, by an Act of the

Legislature in 1889, provides that parents who by habitual drunkenness, notorious or scandalous misconduct, or by ill-treatment, endanger the health, safety, or moral well-being of their children, may be declared to have forfeited all parental rights.

On similar lines the legislation of other countries has proceeded. The sense of duty on the part of society to neglected and degraded children has been steadily deepening and strengthening. The tendency in all countries is towards a more thorough assumption, as against unfit parents, of direct guardianship over the life and future of the children of such parents.

The conviction that for every child there should be substantial equality of opportunity, a real preparation for the work of life, is taking thorough possession of the best minds and of the most enlightened nations.

There has existed, and still exists, much difference in different countries as to the mode in which this State power over the child, where the power of the parent is suspended or cancelled, should be exercised. But a full examination of the whole subject, extended over a considerable period, manifestly shows that the systems of State power over the child, directly exercised by the State through local authorities, are becoming far more approved and more generally adopted than those systems which delegate the power of the State to other bodies or associations of whatever character or constitution.

In the United States, children, dependent, neglected, or abandoned, have been up to the present, in some States, for the most part handed over to private or voluntary associations, which for their charge and care of the children receive contributions from the public purse.

This delegation by the State to private bodies and associations of its grave duty towards dependent and neglected children is now giving way in the United States, so far as public opinion goes, to the policy of

the direct exercise by the State through local authorities of the charge and care of those children for whose welfare and future it has become necessary for the State to provide.

The final conclusion of the best American experience seems to be, that the functions called for in securing the health, the industrial and moral training, and the future of dependent children should be directly exercised by the State through local representative bodies.

This policy brings home as no other does to those to whom these functions are committed a direct and positive responsibility, while it provides a security for efficiency and systematic continuity of effort on the large scale which has never yet been sufficiently attained.

In Australia, this position of the direct action of public authority in the protection of the "disinherited ones" appears to be fully accepted with all its consequences.

In our own country, legislation to secure the protection of children against injury and suffering in their lives and welfare from unfit parents, who from their circumstances or mode of life are incapable of giving care to their children, has been of a very gradual and tentative character. Much has no doubt been done recently, but much more remains to be done.

In child protection and child-saving this country can and ought to lead the way. Our Poor Law in its principle and legal foundation provides a basis on which to ground a legislation of comprehensive and far-reaching order.

Wherever and whenever the parents of neglected children or the children themselves come under the action of the Poor Law administration in any of its aspects, then the occasion exists for the public power, through the Poor Law authorities, to exercise in one form or other the duty of taking charge of these

children, and placing them in conditions that will secure their health, welfare, and future.

Society, through the Poor Law authorities, can perform its plain duty of protecting neglected children on wider lines, and with more efficiency and success than ever yet attempted. If child-saving by the State through Poor Law authorities were carried out to the full extent desirable, how much destitution, misery, dependence, evil behaviour, and crime would be cut off in their sources! Stop child waste, child degradation and demoralisation, and what a spring of evil would be dried up.

But only the full power of the State can master the evil, by giving to the children of neglect and vice a fair chance in life. Only by equal opportunity to all can the children of the land live healthy, industrious, and happy lives.

The child-protecting, child-saving powers of the Poor Law authorities should be consolidated and extended. The gradual introduction of a greater measure of public power in the case of the protection of infancy is well seen in the law relative to infant life protection. The Infant Life Protection Act, 1872, contained provisions for registration and inquest, and offences created by the Act are to be prosecuted in a summary manner.

What a marked advance on this Act is the Infant Life Protection Act, 1897, which has just been passed, and which comes into operation in January next! By this Act, inspectors are to be appointed with definite powers, and a local authority is charged with the duty of providing for the execution of the Act. The local authority for the provinces is the Board of Guardians.

This point of inspection is vital. It supplies the missing power. Looking to the duties of these inspectors, it is fair to express the opinion that women are likely to be the best fitted for the work, and it is hoped that women will be appointed.

In making the Board of Guardians the local authority under this Act an important new field of work is committed to its charge.

The Poor Law Act, 1889, was at the time a real advance in giving to Poor Law authorities power to protect helpless children. This Act is defective (1) as to the children the authorities can protect ; (2) as to the period during which the authorities can protect them.

During the last session of Parliament a Bill was prepared and brought in by Mr Ernest Flower and others, having for its object to remedy these defects. By this Bill, for convenience of reference printed below, Poor Law authorities will be entitled to exercise guardianship over every child maintained by the Guardians (1) who is an orphan, (2) or whose parents, from character, mental deficiency, habits or mode of life, are, in the opinion of the Guardians, unfit to have the control of it. This would give, if the Bill became law, to Boards of Guardians the power they have so long needed to rescue the children of the habitual tramp as well as the children of the "Ins-and-Outs" from their present helpless and hopeless lot, which deprives them of necessary education and training. The Guardians would also be able to protect the child of the habitual drunkard, of the mentally defective, of the notorious evil liver, and of the long-term prisoner.

By this Bill, while the parent forfeits his power over his child, he is not relieved from liability to contribute to its maintenance. The withdrawal of the child from the power of the bad parent, with the liability to contribute to its support, would be very likely to bring home to him for the first time, perhaps, a real sense of parental responsibility. The guardianship as to girls remains as at present until eighteen ; but as to boys is raised to eighteen, with power to extend as to both girls and boys, on written consent, to twenty-one.

There is one grave omission in the Bill. I should make feeble-mindedness in the child a ground of guardianship which should continue as long as the feeble-mindedness continues. To place these neglected, deserted children under public power through the Poor Law authorities would be a lasting good to the children themselves, and remove from society a grave source of degradation and danger. What society suffers and loses by the presence in its midst of these uncared-for children is incalculable. This sad truth, so often stated, is often passed over without being fully realised.

Old and honourable families are proud to trace their descent from generation to generation back to some great ancestor. Think of the family tree of the descendants of a child abandoned by its parents and by society! Perhaps a single illustration will bring this home to the imagination and the heart. I take it from a paper by M. G. Naville, read at the Second International Congress for the Protection of Infancy, held at Geneva in 1896 :—

“A poor girl, abandoned in a village where there was no home for deserted children, lived by begging. She became the mother of a long line of criminals and beggars. To-day her descendants are a curse to the country. They number two hundred criminals. In a single family of this unhappy race there are twenty children, of whom three died in infancy, nine are immured in State prisons for frightful crimes, while the rest are frequently committed to preventive prisons and asylums for beggars. It has been possible to trace through six generations nine thousand descendants of this young girl deserted in her infancy. Of these the greater number are idiots, drunkards, and of evil life.

A BILL to Extend and Amend the Provisions of the Poor Law Act, 1889.

A.D. 1897.

BE it enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :—

1.—(1.) Where a child is maintained by the Guardians of a Union and is an orphan, or the Guardians are of opinion that by reason of character, mental deficiency, habits, or mode of life, the parent of such child is unfitted to have the control of it, the Guardians may at any time resolve that such child shall be under the control of the Guardians until it reaches the age of *eighteen years*, and thereupon until the child reaches that age all the powers and rights of such parent in respect of that child shall, subject as in this Act mentioned, vest in the Guardians.

Control of
Guardians
over orphans
and children of
persons unfit
to have control
of them.

(2.) A court of summary jurisdiction, if satisfied on complaint made by a parent of the child that the child has not been maintained by the Guardians, or that such parent is not unfitted to have or to resume the control of the child, or that it is for the benefit of the child that it should be either permanently or temporarily under the control of such parent, or that the resolution of the Guardians should be determined, may make an order accordingly, and any such order shall be complied with by the Guardians, and if the order determines the resolution, the resolution shall be thereby determined as from the date of the order, and the Guardians shall cease to have the rights and powers of the parent as respects such child.

(3.) For the purposes of this Act a child shall be deemed to be maintained by the Guardians if it is wholly or partly maintained by them in a workhouse or in any district school, separate school, separate infirmary, sick asylum, hospital for infectious diseases, institution for the deaf, dumb, blind, or idiots, or any certified school under the Poor Law (Certified Schools) Act, 1862, or is boarded out by the Guardians, whether within or without the limits of the Union.

(4.) Nothing in this section shall relieve any person from any liability to contribute to the maintenance of a child, but the fact of such contribution being made shall not deprive the Guardians of any of the powers and rights conferred on them by this section.

(5.) Nothing in this section shall authorise the Guardians to cause a child to be educated in any religious creed other than that in which the child would have been educated but for any resolution of the Guardians under this section, nor affect the enactments respecting the religious education of a child maintained by the Guardians, or respecting the right of any minister of the same religious persuasion

as the child to visit and instruct the child, nor affect any of the enactments specified in the schedule to the Poor Law Act, 1889, which enactments relate to the religious education of children maintained by Guardians.

Amendment of
section 1 of
52 & 53 Vict.
c. 56.

2. Section 1 of the Poor Law Act, 1889, is hereby amended as follows:—

Guardians shall have power to retain control of boys as well as of girls until the age of *eighteen years*, and sub-section (1) of the said section shall accordingly be read and have effect as if the words “if a boy of sixteen and if a girl” were omitted therefrom: Provided that a boy under the control of Guardians at the date of the *passing of this Act* shall not be detained by them under such control after the age of sixteen years without his written consent being proved to the satisfaction of a court of summary jurisdiction to have been given voluntarily and with full knowledge of its effect.

Sub-section (4) of the said section is hereby repealed, and in lieu thereof the following sub-section is hereby enacted, that is to say:—

“(4.) Where a parent is imprisoned under a sentence of penal servitude or imprisonment with hard labour for a term exceeding six months, this section shall apply as if the child or children of that parent had been deserted by that parent.”

Consent to
continuance
of Guardians’
control up to
age of twenty-
one.

3. When a boy or girl under the control of Guardians has reached the age of *eighteen years*, such boy or girl may consent in writing that the provisions of section 1 of the Poor Law Act, 1889, shall continue to apply to such boy or girl till the age of twenty-one is reached, and thereupon those provisions shall continue to apply accordingly till such boy or girl has reached the age of *twenty-one years*.

Penalty on
assisting chil-
dren to escape
from control
of Guardians,
&c.

4. Any person who—

Knowingly assists, directly or indirectly, a child under the control of Guardians to escape from the place where the child is under such control; or

Directly or indirectly induces such a child so to escape; or

Knowingly harbours or conceals a child who has so escaped, or prevents him from returning to such place as aforesaid,

shall be liable on summary conviction to a penalty not exceeding *twenty pounds*.

Construction
and short title.

5. This Act shall be construed together with the Poor Law Act, 1889, as one Act, and may be cited as the Poor Law Act, 1897.

DISCUSSION.

Mr W. M. MOORSOM (Local Government Board Inspector) said he had often been brought face to face with this difficulty, especially with regard to girls. It seemed to him to be of the utmost importance that the Guardians should have the power to detain females. He scarcely ever made an inspection without coming across a case of this kind, and often he discussed with the Matron how to keep a girl from taking her discharge in the ordinary way. It required the serious attention of the Legislature. If the Guardians had the power to detain young people, it would prevent many of those cases which were a disgrace to the country. With regard to orphans, it was only the other day he was asked by a lady, belonging to the Girls' Friendly Society, whether a girl who had reached the age of sixteen, and had declared that she intended leaving the home and going on the stage, could be detained. The antecedents of the family showed that the stage was the least eligible career she could undertake. He had to reply that so far as he understood the law, the lady could not any longer control the girl's movements. With regard to children generally, it was a most important part of their work, and that fact was not always quite appreciated. He thought that the care of the children was even more important than that of the sick, for in the one case they were dealing with the future, in the other with the present and the past. In dealing with the children, they were sowing the seeds of a harvest that would be reaped in twenty-five or thirty years' time. They might influence the children, and it was a fact not always understood by the public and the press, that the children in the charge of the Guardians were not those who formed the paupers of the future. The paupers of to-day are not to any large extent the children of the Workhouse in the past, but the weak ones of the present generation, thrown out by the hard and competitive life. There were people thrown out in every generation, because they were for some reason or other defective, and unable to hold their own in the race for life. He was very fond of calling their institutions hospitals for the children, not for physical or mental matters only, but hospitals of character. They had weak characters to deal with, and therefore they had to train those characters differently from what they would train perfectly healthy and vigorous and sound characters; and they had to realise that the utmost care must be expended upon the children under the control of the Guardians. If they looked upon the work in that way, there would be rapid progress. He had the highest admiration for many of their Poor Law Schools, and as a practical man, having experience of other classes of schools, he could not for a moment understand the virulence of the attacks which had been made on the Poor Law Schools. So far as his experience went, the schools would compare with any of the public schools for *esprit de corps*, scholastic vigour, and prowess in games. He was credibly informed by inspectors of schools that many of their Poor Law

Schools were quite equal to the best public schools in their respective districts. "Half-timers" in Poor Law Schools, at any rate in one school in that district, had fifty per cent. more instruction than the "half-timers" in the town schools. To condemn them on that account was to show absolute ignorance of the work which was done in Poor Law Schools.

Mr JOHN BYRNE (Chairman, Liverpool) said that great ability had been shown by the ladies in preparing the papers, and he felt that a compliment was due to them, especially to Mrs Pankhurst. He regretted that no figures were given as to the success of the children after leaving the custody of the Guardians. At present the Guardians had no power over the children after they had left the schools, but he felt that if they could hold them until the children had received some technical instruction, the number of successful children would probably be increased. There was another consideration he would like to put before them. Did they do their duty to the children in the matter of diet? It appeared to him that the allowance was insufficient for growing children of fourteen or fifteen years of age. It was seldom, in his experience, that the boys were so well developed in the chest as to enable them to enter the army or navy. Whether or not that was due to an inadequate allowance of meat he did not know. In Liverpool the girls were generally sent to domestic service, and in future he would be glad if girls could receive at least a year's instruction in domestic economy before being sent to service. Some girls were not adapted to domestic service, and for such some other employment ought to be provided. The wages were often quite inadequate to keep the children comfortably.

Mr H. ACKERLEY (Clerk to the Wigan Board) said he thought it might be objectionable that the Guardians should have the power, in the first instance, of saying that parents had acted improperly, so as to entitle the Guardians to the custody of the children. Parental rights were properly safe-guarded in the second clause of the Bill introduced during the past session of Parliament, and he therefore moved that the Conference was in favour of the passing of the Bill in question.

Mr R. J. CLEGG (Chairman, Leigh), seconding, said it seemed to him advisable that Unions should be grouped for the purpose of affording homes for the proper treatment of serious cases. It was a rather hard thing to expect any particular Union to take the initiative in the matter. He would be glad if the Conference could suggest any feasible scheme for grouping the Unions.

Dr J. MILSON RHODES (Chairman, Chorlton) said he was not going to say what should be done by them, but what had been done in other parts, and ought to be done in England. The Manchester Boards had amalgamated to provide special accommodation for imbeciles and for tramps. With the latter he had nothing to do at that Conference. He would simply speak about

the imbeciles. The Chairman referred to the enormous improvement that had been made in the provision for all classes of paupers, but he must differ from him on one point. He did not think that there had been the same ratio of improvement in the provision for epileptic and imbecile children as for other classes of paupers. A short time ago the Joint-Committee asked Mr M'Dougall and himself to visit and report on some German colonies for epileptics and imbeciles. As a rule Englishmen thought everything "made in Germany" was trumpery and bad, but he was bound to say that so far as regarded provision for epileptic and imbecile children, Germany was twenty years in advance of England. It was not a pleasant thing for an Englishman to have to say, but having been there, he was bound to say that the Germans were doing their duty towards those classes more thoroughly and with less regard to the cost than were the English. Instead of providing one large school for feeble-minded children, they provided a considerable number of school-rooms, not one of which was capable of holding more than sixteen children. In that way each child's attention was concentrated, and each child had its own task. They went in for every appliance that could be used in the training of children. The corridors were furnished with stuffed animals and pictures and models, with a view to teaching the children to observe, and to teach them form and colour. Every one knew that the fingers of feeble-minded children were not adapted for quick movement or anything of that kind, but in every one of those schools there was a first-class gymnasium equipped with every appliance for developing the physical and mental powers of the children. In one room he went into he found a lot of little beds. He said, "Surely this is not a dormitory." "Oh, no," the master replied, "it is for epileptics; and the children are taught lying down, as it is the best position for them." Each child had its own little garden, and he was very much pleased with the way in which children took him with pride to show him special flowers in their little plots. He was informed that the flowers grown by these feeble-minded children had realised a large sum in the local market. These things could be done in England, and they would have to follow the German plan. He was an Englishman, and he did not like following German plans, but he was quite sure the Germans were right. They must collect the children from two or three counties, and make adequate provision for them. The newer the asylum, the smaller the number of children in each building. In fact, the newest asylums were built on the Cottage Home system. In all his travels he found no ward with more than sixteen beds in it, and he was convinced now, after very careful consideration of the subject, that they would do better in England if instead of building enormous blocks they built on the colony system. He fervently trusted that the Local Government Board would accept the suggestion he made some time ago, that inspectors like Mr Jenner Fust should go abroad and thoroughly inquire into the German system. They must have information from all quarters if they were to

do their duty in the future; they had not done their duty in this country in the past. The question was a pressing one, and would have to be adequately dealt with. In one place he visited there were about five hundred imbeciles and two hundred and eighty epileptic children. The place was elaborately got up. He was often called an extravagant Guardian, but he could not go quite so far as they had gone in that place. He asked how much it had cost, and was told four million marks (£200,000) had been spent on it, and they took no other class except paupers. Now, if a country so careful of every pfennig as Germany provided on that scale for some seven hundred people, it was evidently the duty of the richest country in the world to make proper provision for epileptics and imbeciles. They had not done their duty. They were doing it in regard to the sane and the sick poor, but they had failed lamentably in regard to the feeble-minded and epileptic children. He would be glad if Mr Ackerley would couple with his resolution a suggestion that provision should be made, and soon made, for epileptic and imbecile children, and also for sane children in Workhouses, by the combination of the different Boards. As to the detention of in-and-out paupers, the Germans did something in that direction too. He had never seen a real Workhouse for downright vagabonds until he went to Germany, and there he saw an institution where the men and women, "in-and-outs," had to stop and work for three months. More power was needed for dealing with vagrants; and also for dealing with parents who neglected their children. If parents neglected their children, there should be power to send the parents to real Workhouses, where they would be made to understand that they were breaking the law of the State and must be punished for it. He hoped that the Legislature would strengthen the hands of the Guardians, and give them power to detain "in-and-outs," and make them work for some time. Another class that was often in and out were the drunkards. In France there were special places for the reception of alcoholics, where they might be kept for three months, or for a year or two years—in fact, until they behaved themselves. Many drunkards had lost all moral control over themselves, and drifted into drunkenness simply for the want of it. More power should be given to Guardians for dealing with this class. In conclusion, he wished to refer to Mr Byrne's observation about defective physical development of children. Some years ago the difficulty was discussed in the Chorlton Union. They established a first-class gymnasium, and employed a thoroughly competent instructor to put the children through a perfect scientific course of gymnastics, and since then they had sent dozens and dozens of boys into the army and navy, and it had paid the Board well, while the children had got good employment.

In reply to a member, Dr RHODES added that the expense of the German institutions which he had described was borne by the State (not the same thing as the Empire) from funds resembling rather the income-tax than the rates.

Mr JENNER FUST (Local Government Board Inspector) said he was glad to find himself in agreement to a great extent with the two admirable papers they had heard that day. As regards adult "in-and-outs," there was very little hope of the State giving Guardians any additional powers of detention, or of sending them to industrial colonies, simply on the ground that they had entered and discharged themselves so many times within a certain period. Parliament would be apt to take the view that poverty is no crime, and in that they would all agree; but when it came to wilful pauperism, the thing was very different, and the Legislature had already imposed penalties on those who neglected themselves or their families. That provision had not had the effect it was hoped it would have, as it was very difficult to prove that a man had neglected opportunities of providing for himself and his family. If the onus of proof were shifted on to the individual, it would have a good effect, so that a man whose family frequently became chargeable to the rates should have to prove that he had tried to do something for them. So far as they could produce an effect on the "in-and-outs," so far they produced an effect on the children. He took it that the Guardians only wanted to deal with the children of parents who had forfeited their rights by ignoring their duty towards the children. He quite agreed with those who said that the State should assume the guardianship of such children, and take them away from their parents. But he would not leave the parents free by any means, but would make them contribute to the utmost of their power. He did not think there would be any difficulty in getting at the parents for the contributions. The main argument against taking charge of the children was that it would be an inducement to parents to neglect their children. But was it a real argument? Miss Clifford, in a paper read at the South-Western Conference at Bath, quoted the report of the relieving officer at Bristol, who said that parents were afraid of being deprived of the control of their children, and that instead of encouraging cruelty the effect had been the reverse. Miss Clifford declared that even in the lowest slum it was a great disgrace to have forfeited a child, and not to know where he was. But even if it was a real argument that parents would try to get rid of their responsibility, ought Guardians to let it stand in their way? They had to choose between bearing the expense of the children for a certain number of years, and allowing them to grow up as worthless as their parents. When they put it in the scale in that way, he could not help thinking that the interests of the children would prevail. Then as to the education of casuals' children, canal-boat children were required to be registered, and why should not those who were wandering about with children have to report themselves to the local authorities? Surely it was better that the State should maintain the children than that they should be allowed to wander aimlessly about the country. The good of the children should be the point. As to the education of the weak-minded, he was of opinion that each indi-

vidual ought to be dealt with separately. He thought that the powers of the Guardians over children who had been placed in service should be extended, and that the Guardians should have at least as much power as the parents who had failed in their duty.

The resolution was then formally moved by Mr ACKERLEY, and seconded by Mr CLEGG, as follows :—

“That the Conference desires to press upon the Local Government Board the urgent importance of the subject dealt with by the Bill introduced in the last session of Parliament under the title ‘A Bill to extend and amend the provisions of the Poor Law Act, 1859’; and at the same time to press upon the Guardians of Lancashire and Cheshire the desirability of their considering how far, by combined action on the part of neighbouring Unions, accommodation specially adapted for feeble-minded children and of sane epileptics may be secured.”

The resolution was carried unanimously.

The PRESIDENT, on behalf of the Conference, thanked the readers of the papers.

Mr W. R. BREWSTER, Chairman of the West Derby Board of Guardians, read the following paper :—

THE PROPER PRINCIPLES OF ADMINISTRATION OF OUTDOOR RELIEF.

BY MR W. R. BREWSTER,

Chairman of the West Derby Board of Guardians.

IN order to deal in a fitting and comprehensive manner with this subject, it is necessary to study, firstly, the laws relating to the administration, generally, of relief to the poor; secondly, the regulations in force issued by competent authority in conformity with the law; thirdly, the regulations adopted by the Board of Guardians with the view to uniformity of practice in dealing with special classes of applicants; and fourthly, the practice generally of the Guardians in the administration of outdoor relief, including the arrangements for dividing the Union into well-defined districts, the appointment of Relieving Officers to such districts, the terms of such appointments in regard to salary, the arrangements for the distribution of relief, the appoint-

ment of Relief Committees and the composition thereof, and other arrangements.

The law as it at present exists is so well known to the majority of my hearers that any exposition of it on this occasion would be superfluous; suffice it to say that the fact of its having remained in its reformed condition practically unaltered in its main principles for the past sixty years and upwards proves its soundness.*

The regulations, in conformity with the law in force at the present time in the majority of Unions and Parishes represented at this Conference, are those issued by the Poor Law Board on the 14th December 1852 under the title of the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order of that date, and may be briefly summarised as follows :—

1. Outdoor relief to able-bodied males to be given, as to one-half thereof, in kind.

2. Outdoor relief when required for a longer period than one week to be given weekly or oftener.

* Mr Charles Booth, in his work entitled "The Aged Poor in England and Wales," published by Macmillan & Co. in 1894, says :—

"Never was there a law less peremptory and exact in its prescriptions. That no one who is willing to ask assistance shall be allowed to die of want is practically its sole assertion. It does not even give any *right* to relief, but grips the question solely by making neglect (if any serious consequences ensue) a criminal offence for those responsible for the execution of the law.

"As regards the able-bodied, there are, indeed, regulations which have the force of law, prescribing the terms on which relief may be given; but for those who are not able-bodied, and these include almost all the old, each Board of Guardians is at liberty to adopt its own rules, and to change them at will, or to act without any rules at all. Each Board is free to give any sum it may think fit as out-relief; free to construe "destitution" as it pleases; free to make what arrangements it thinks for the maintenance and comfort of the inmates of the Workhouse."

3. Prohibition of outdoor relief for purposes of—
 - (a.) Establishment in trade or business.
 - (b.) Redemption from pawn of tools, &c.
 - (c.) Purchase of tools, &c.
 - (d.) Conveyance from place to place with certain exceptions.
 - (e.) Payment of rent, excepting shelter or temporary lodging in certain cases mentioned.
4. Prohibition of outdoor relief to persons non-resident in the Union with certain exceptions.
5. Prohibition of outdoor relief to able-bodied male persons while employed for wages, &c.
6. Able-bodied male persons if relieved out of the Workhouse to be sent to work and kept employed.
7. Provision for departure from the regulations as regards classes 5 and 6 in cases of sudden and urgent necessity, and for other reasons mentioned.
8. Control and supervision by the Poor Law Board (now the Local Government Board) of arrangements for labour test.
9. Authority for relief in certain cases by way of loan.
10. Authority for departure from any of the regulations with the sanction of the Local Government Board.

The regulations thus referred to have been so long in practice, and are so well known, that further reference to them is unnecessary, excepting to point to the important difference between them and those contained in the Outdoor Relief Prohibitory Order of the 21st December 1844, which is, I believe, in force in all the Unions to which the Regulation Order is not applicable.

Those of my hearers who are familiar with the terms of the Prohibitory Order know that one of its principle features is the absolute prohibition of outdoor

relief to able-bodied persons (male or female) excepting in cases of sudden and urgent necessity, and for other special reasons, and I would ask, that in considering the applicability of my remarks in the case of any particular Union where the Prohibitory Order is in force, due consideration should be given to this point.

Obviously those Unions in which the more restrictive regulations are in force cannot be excluded from consideration in this connection, although at the same time, when weighing and comparing results, those Unions in which the regulations giving greater latitude are in force, and in which the percentage and cost of outdoor relief show a decrease due to careful administration, are entitled to claim greater credit than those showing similar results, but in which those results are partly due to the restrictive character of the regulations in force.

From time to time Boards of Guardians have, for the purpose of facilitating the transaction of their business, adopted rules for the administration of outdoor relief.

In the Union of which I am a member a set of rules with this object were adopted in 1887, and briefly put they provide as follows :—

1. Outdoor relief not to be given for a longer period than eight weeks, excepting in cases of chronic sickness, or of aged persons.

2. Outdoor relief to be refused as far as practicable to :—

(a.) Single able-bodied men.

(b.) Able-bodied men without children, or having only one child to support, except in cases of sickness.

(c.) Able-bodied men with families residing in furnished lodgings, except in cases of sickness.

- (*d.*) Men of improvident or vicious habits, except in cases of sickness.
- (*e.*) Men with families where there is reason to believe that they are of drunken or immoral habits, except in cases of sickness.
- (*f.*) Single able-bodied women.
- (*g.*) Able-bodied widows without children.
- (*h.*) Married women (with or without families) whose husbands are in gaol.
- (*i.*) Deserted married women.
- (*k.*) Persons residing with relatives when the united income is sufficient for their support.
- (*l.*) Widows in certain cases.
- (*m.*) Improvident or intemperate persons generally.

Having thus referred to the laws and the regulations in force, it is my purpose to give some particulars of the results of the regular and consistent administration thereof in the Union I represent, and to prove thereby that the proper principles of administration are embraced therein.

It appears from a return issued by Mr Jenner-Fust in June 1896, that whilst the number of indoor paupers relieved on the 1st January 1896 was greater by 357 than the average for the *five* preceding years (the numbers being respectively 3,581 on the 1st January 1896, and 3,224 the average for the *five* preceding years), yet the number of outdoor paupers relieved on the same date was less by 332 than the average for the same period (the numbers being respectively 3,492 on the 1st January 1896, and 3,824 the average for the *five* preceding years), the proportion of paupers, taking indoor and outdoor together, to the census population being the same on 1st January 1896 as the average for

the five preceding years, viz., 1 in 63, the figures for Lancashire being 1 in 52 on the 1st January 1896, and 1 in 57 the average for the five preceding years, a comparison decidedly in favour of the Union.

These figures, at the first glance, do not appear to afford much ground for congratulation on the score of reduction in numbers, as the reduction in outdoor cases is less, to a slight extent, than the increase in the indoor; but a reference to the return itself will disclose the fact, that whilst the increase in indoor cases in West Derby is no greater relatively than in the county generally, yet the reduction in the number of outdoor paupers relieved on the 1st January 1896, as compared with the average for the five preceding years, is greater in proportion than the average increase in the county generally.

Thus the increase per cent. of indoor paupers in West Derby is 11.0, whilst in the county generally it is 13.9.

On the other hand, the outdoor paupers show a decrease of 8.6 per cent., whilst the figures for the county generally show an increase.

As regards the cost of relief, the returns also disclose the fact that the slight increase of £930 in the cost of maintenance between that for the year ended Lady-day 1896 and the average for the five preceding years is more than compensated for by the reduction of £1,169 in the cost of outdoor relief.

But as it is not the purpose of this paper to deal with the question of indoor relief, excepting incidentally when referring to it as a form of relief to be offered in preference to outdoor relief, either as a test of destitution or as being more suited to the needs of the applicant, I shall confine myself to showing the result which has been attained in the reduction in the numbers and cost of outdoor relief since the adoption by the Guardians of the rules for the administration of outdoor relief in 1887.

The following are the figures showing the number of paupers relieved on the 1st January in each year, from 1887 to the present year, also the cost of relief for each year ending at Lady-day from 1887 to the present year.

It is of course understood that the number of persons relieved, as given in the tables, does not represent the whole number of individuals relieved during the year; but taking the numbers at the time when the claims for relief are usually the heaviest, a fair idea is obtained of the mean rate of pauperism, and for the purposes of this paper and of ordinary comparison they will be found suitable.

Of course the figures relating to the cost show the actual cost throughout the year.

Number of persons in receipt of relief, exclusive of vagrants and lunatics in asylums:—

	Numbers on 1st January.			Cost during year ended Lady-day.		
	Indoor.	Outdoor.	Total.	Indoor. £	Outdoor. £	Total. £
1887	2,768	8,363	11,131	24,492	24,533	49,025
1888	2,881	7,228	10,109	26,353	22,681	49,034
1889	3,048	6,451	9,499	27,159	21,234	48,393
1890	3,113	5,236	8,349	32,151	17,655	49,806
1891	2,904	4,309	7,213	30,285	14,862	45,147
1892	3,030	3,961	6,991	33,122	13,310	46,432
1893	3,107	3,507	6,614	33,640	11,681	45,321
1894	3,423	3,724	7,147	37,623	12,016	49,639
1895	3,411	3,524	6,935	34,895	11,600	46,495
1896	3,487	3,445	6,932	35,453	11,593	47,046
1897	3,506	3,256	6,762	35,796	10,607	46,403

So that the decrease in ten years in outdoor relief, as represented by the fall in the numbers from 8,363 to 3,256, was 5,107, whilst the increase in the number of indoor paupers was only 738, thus demonstrating that proper administration of outdoor relief, resulting in a decrease in numbers, does not necessarily involve a corresponding increase in the number of the indoor; but that, on the other hand, a firm and wise policy of administration which, whilst not excluding sentiment

altogether, yet confines it within common-sense limits, is the surest means of bringing about the results which all experienced Poor Law reformers look for and expect, chief among which is the disappearance of the spirit of dependence upon the poor rates in times of distress, and the inculcation of habits of thrift and self-reliance in place thereof, at the same time enabling the Guardians to deal, if not in a generous fashion, at any rate in no niggardly spirit, with the cases of those who, through no fault of their own, but from sickness or death in the family, or other unexpected circumstances, are reduced to a condition of poverty and destitution.

The population of the Union, as shown by the Census Returns, was in 1871, 257,083; in 1881, 358,073; and in 1891, 444,403.

Taking into account the growth of the population during the past ten years, which, according to the above figures, is at the rate of 10,000 per annum, it is interesting and gratifying to be able to record the fact, proved by the experience of the Guardians and their officers, that the number of persons *requiring relief*, judged by the number of applications, far from increasing in the same proportion, actually shows a decrease as compared with the numbers for 1887. This remark also applies to the number of persons *actually* receiving relief.

It may be argued that this result is arrived at by reason of the improvement in the condition of the labouring classes, and a consequent reduction in the number of that class of individuals whom it has become the practice to describe as the "submerged tenth." Let us hope that this is so. For my part, I should be willing to forego any of the credit which appears to be due to my Board as careful administrators, if I were satisfied that the conditions of life at the present are so improved as to account for the decrease I have pointed to.

Having thus shown the practical results of a regular and consistent policy, I shall now endeavour to briefly explain some of the methods referred to under my fourth heading, first premising that any attempt to act on similar lines would fail in its object to some extent, and be productive of hardship in some cases, unless accompanied by a liberal policy of indoor administration ; and I would in passing merely point to the fact that contemporaneously with the introduction of the system, the Guardians took measures for increasing and improving the accommodation for the indoor poor by erecting Cottage Homes for children, a new Infirmary for the curable sick, and a Classification Workhouse for the able-bodied, leaving the Workhouse at Walton free to be adapted and utilised for the more generous treatment of the aged and infirm, and those suffering from chronic ailments. Indeed I look upon Walton Workhouse as a perfect retreat for the destitute aged and infirm ; the classification in this house itself is well carried out, even to the extent of providing cottages for aged married couples.

It goes without saying that to carry out such a policy involved the expenditure of a large sum of money, but the results in every direction have been such as to fully justify it.

It will of course be contended, and with good reason, that the position of the Union from a financial standpoint is more favourable to the successful carrying out of such a scheme than would be the case in the majority of the Unions in the district ; but at least we have the gratification of knowing that having the means, we have not hesitated to employ them in giving effect to our policy.

In short, the arrangements for affording indoor relief are such that the aged and infirm, the children and the sick, are treated in separate institutions, and to these classes the term "Workhouse" has no meaning so far as their treatment is concerned ; whilst the

refusal of outdoor relief in cases belonging to these classes, when their circumstances and surroundings are such as to convince the Guardians that indoor relief is best in the interests of the applicants themselves, cannot even, if offered as a test of destitution, be productive of any hardships, excepting such as are inseparable from the curtailment of liberty and the enforcement of systematic and correct habits.

The digression has been somewhat lengthy, and I must therefore ask for some indulgence, and will conclude by dealing briefly with some of the methods referred to.

The division of the Union into Relieving Officers' Districts is of course regulated by the rules of the Local Government Board in regard to the limits of acreage and population.

The salaries, however, of these officers are not regulated by the amount of work performed, judged by the number of applications dealt with, as was to some extent the case formerly, but each newly appointed officer receives a minimum commencing salary which increases year by year to a certain maximum, on the principle that the services of the officer become more valuable as he gains experience.

The fact that the amount of work he has to perform is reduced by careful administration does not affect his income.

As far as possible, they are relieved of all duties not strictly appertaining to the receipt and investigation of applications for relief, and with this object a Pay Clerk is appointed and two Collectors, separate arrangements being made for dealing with lunatics.

Arrangements are also made for the supply of medicines and relief in kind from the stores belonging to the Guardians in various centres, and these conduce materially to the success of the system generally, the offer of a ticket for relief in kind being often a good test of the actual needs of the applicant.

Full advantage is also taken of the power to appoint Relief Committees for the purpose of dealing with applications near the homes of the applicants as well as at the Central Relief Offices.

A prominent feature of the composition of these Committees, and one productive of much benefit, is the appointment of a Chairman to each Committee, selected on account of his experience, thus ensuring continuity of practice.

It is also made a condition that as far as possible no member of the Committee shall be resident in the district allotted to it, thus ensuring greater freedom of action to the members.

If all the members were chosen from their own district, it would bring in a great amount of sentiment which on all occasions should be avoided, for outdoor relief given just because you have known the applicant is opposed to the best principles of Poor Law relief, and is fraught with great danger to the community. Neither should there be a niggardly pittance offered when administering outdoor relief, but the Guardians should see that the amount given is adequate to sustain the applicant in a proper and respectable manner.

In conclusion, I must ask my hearers to accept my apologies if in my desire to support my case I have given undue prominence to the efforts made in my own Union to improve the administration of outdoor relief, and consequently that of indoor relief.

Proud as I am of the position attained by my Board, I am still sensible that there are many amongst my audience who can point to equally successful results in their own case.

Still I hope that my treatment of the subject has commended itself to my hearers, and I trust that it may at least open the way to a discussion of the various modes adopted throughout the district which cannot fail to be of benefit particularly in the case of

the large number of members elected since the passing of the Act of 1894, many of whom entered the field of Poor Law labour for the first time then.

DISCUSSION.

Mr G. MACDONALD (Clerk to the Manchester Board) said he noted with pleasure that the rules adopted by the West Derby Board were nearly the same as those adopted by the Manchester Guardians twenty years ago. Those rules had been amended only in a very slight degree. Opposition to the rules had disappeared, and there had never been the slightest attempt on the part of the electors to alter them. The Manchester rules had been adopted by a great many Guardians—on paper. No deviation from the rules could take place without the consent of the whole Board. The effect of the rules had been most surprising in cutting down out-relief. He had had considerable correspondence with other Guardians, and had always warmly recommended the adoption of the rules.

Mrs SALE (Chorlton) did not wish to criticise the paper in any way, but there was one rule to which she objected, that relating to widows with children. If a widow with a family had one boy who was earning 15s. a week, the Guardians should, in considering what relief they would grant, make ample deductions from the boy's earnings in respect of the cost of his own maintenance. Otherwise hardship would ensue.

Dr RHODES (Chorlton) said he had made careful inquiry into the institutions in the West Derby Union. There were no better hospitals or schools or workhouses anywhere in the country than in the West Derby district. Before they carried out the West Derby regulations, Guardians must see that their institutions were in a proper state for the accommodation of the poor. He was sorry so say that there were many places in England where the hospitals were a perfect disgrace to the Guardians. He hoped that every Guardian who came to those Conferences would insist upon the infirmaries being proper places for the treatment of the sick poor. They ought to make their hospitals efficient, because the better the hospitals, the sooner the sick were cured. Persons who had to go into the infirmaries should learn there those habits of decency, cleanliness, and order, which would enable them to avoid illness in the future. The West Derby schools were excellent, but there were many in England, especially in the southern counties, that were a disgrace to the Guardians who had charge of them. They could not carry out those principles everywhere. Circumstances altered cases. In Manchester they had a large shifting population of tramps and others coming out and going in. But in the country districts, where they knew the

people, and the lives they were leading, it was possible to administer out-relief. But in London, where in one district more than one-third of the people changed their residences every year, it was impossible to get to know the characters of the people. But wherever they refused outdoor relief, they must see that their institutions were of the best.

Mr H. DARLINGTON (Wigan) said he had been asked to say something on the subject, perhaps because he came from a Union that had been frequently condemned for overdoing out-relief. He hoped, however, that Mr Jenner Fust could see some trifling improvement upon what his predecessor always regretted. It could not be too much borne in mind that circumstances in each district differed. Why Whitechapel should be considered such a model Union, he could not say. Its admirers had not pursued their investigations far enough to see how its parsimonious treatment of the poor operated upon the adjacent Unions. A great many of the "submerged tenth" were to be found elsewhere than in Whitechapel, only other Guardians were actuated by more humane principles. Relieving officers had sometimes said to him, "You're going against the Manchester rules." He had replied that he was not there to carry out the Manchester rules, or any other rules. He was the Guardian of the poor. If a Guardian had not the common-sense and fearlessness to decide upon the cases from his own district in his own way, he was not fit to be a Guardian. When Mr Moorsom made a visit to their Union, he (Mr Darlington) asked him by what authority he did so, and upon what principles he selected the different Unions which he visited as a sort of spy—"Oh"—he failed to get an answer. (Laughter.) Let the Guardians of the various Unions take each case upon its own merits, irrespective of rules; let each Guardian bring to bear upon the case all the information he could obtain, and see that the relieving officers thoroughly investigated cases; and then they need not care about Liverpool rules or Manchester rules; they could make rules of their own. (Hear, hear, and laughter.)

Mrs PANKHURST (Chorlton) said that although not in agreement with the reader of the paper as to the principles of out-relief, she was glad of that opportunity of testifying to the excellent arrangements she had seen in the West Derby Union. They had heard a great deal in praise of the Manchester rules. She came from an adjoining Union, and it was there that they felt the effects of the Manchester rules, and she said so advisedly. (Hear, hear.) She spoke from experience, having attended the Relief Committees often enough and long enough to see that it was perfectly impossible to make hard and fast rules for the administration of relief. She would challenge any Guardian to administer relief for two consecutive years without arriving at that opinion. In her own Union relief was given on the merits of the case, and if an applicant was not considered fit for out-relief, the House was offered them. She most emphatically dissented from the rule that relief should not be given to deserted

wives or widows. Why should a woman only have an order for the workhouse because she had a bad husband. She had greater faith in human nature—though work in a relief office did a great deal to shake one's faith in human nature—than to believe that people would desert their children in order that the children might receive the miserable amount of relief which was always given. She also demurred to the suggestion that Guardians should not recommend cases arising in their own districts. As far as possible, each Guardian ought to look after his own district, but not alone. If a Guardian looked after the cases in his own locality, he would have to act fairly, for if he got the reputation either of being harsh, or of having favourites, he would not be re-elected. Over and over again her Board had had to bully men who had neglected their wives and families. She had herself used strong language in doing it, but had never found that those men had, as they had threatened, attended public meetings to denounce her as a harsh Guardian. Her advice was, get in touch with the various charitable organisations in the district, and get to know how the poor are being helped. They were having a "lock-out" in the Manchester district, and the labourers, who had nothing to do with the struggle, were its victims. These men's wages were only about 18s. a week, and they could not save money, but not one of them had applied for relief, although she was of opinion that it would be far better for them to apply for legal State help than go round the streets with collecting-boxes—a most demoralising thing. They were afraid of losing their votes, and in the case of these hard-working respectable men the loss of their votes under such circumstances was a scandalous thing.

Mr R. A. LEACH (Clerk to the Rochdale Board) said there had been a good deal of praise of the Manchester rules, but he did not think those rules had ever been spoken of too highly, and the same might be said of the Whitechapel Union. At the same time they might as well have the whole truth. (Hear, hear.) He must compliment Mrs Sale and Mrs Pankhurst upon not being troubled by "namby-pambyism"; but he would like to know whether, in the case of a decent woman whose husband was in prison or deceased, the Manchester Guardians always enforced the House-test. If the Relief Committee could not depart from the rules, was it not the fact that the whole Board could deal with cases as seemed best to them? Again, if the committee could not give relief as relief, was it not often given in the shape of wages? The Manchester Guardians could find employment for large numbers of women, because they had large institutions to keep in order. In Whitechapel, his friend Mr Vallance furnished every year a most elaborate report on the administration of the Union; and it was astonishing to find the large proportion of cases that had been handed over to the Charity Organisation Society. If persons applied for relief, the Guardians had no right, he contended, to hand them over to the charitable. There was no shame in taking relief

from the rates if the destitute person was respectable. That it was a disgrace was a sentiment based upon ignorance. He was astonished that Dr Rhodes seemed to favour the idea of out-relief in rural districts, though he banned it in the towns. Some years ago Dr Rhodes read a paper before the Royal Statistical Society, showing that where out-relief was rampant in the rural districts, it was rampant at the expense of the wage-earner. He (the speaker) thought it would be a good thing for the country if out-relief was stopped altogether by statutory enactment. He said, and said it fearlessly, that there was nothing that produced out-relief so much as out-relief itself. When a widow came before the Guardians and got out-relief, he had often known it to stamp pauperism not only on the widow but on her children. The percentage of workhouse children who eventually became again chargeable to the rates was very small, but if they took the names at random from any relief list, they would find a large proportion who had had pauperism instilled into them by this false though kind-hearted policy. It was not likely the Legislature would abolish out-relief, for that would bring about a reaction which would be more harmful than the evil they were fighting against ; but if they looked at the interests of the children, there was every reason why the Guardians should exercise the greatest discrimination in granting out-relief, and giving it wisely, should give it adequately. The more they improved the indoor institutions, the more they would attract the destitute to them.

Alderman HOULDING (Liverpool) said Mr Leach complimented Mrs Sale and Mrs Pankhurst upon not being troubled by "namby-pambyism." He could not compliment Mr Leach upon not being troubled by "bunkum." (Laughter and applause.) It had always been the aim of his Board to get and keep the children away from the workhouse. He would like to ask Mr Leach what he would do in the case of a widow, thirty-five years of age, with three children of school age. The woman would not go into the workhouse because it would break up her home, and even if it was only one room, her home was as much to her as their houses were to them. He contended that if the woman could not keep the children at school, the Guardians ought to supplement her earnings by giving out-relief. He had no sympathy with the "ins-and-outs." But where they had a working man earning only about 18s. a week, it took him all his time to keep his wife and family upon it, and as soon as the children got old enough to be useful to their parents off they flew to make nests of their own. In time against younger men the old man could not get any work. What were they going to do with him? The time was come for old-age pensions, and the receipt of out-relief should not deprive a man of his legal rights. They must look after the aged, who had been hewers of wood and drawers of water all their lives. Let the old couple in their declining years live together in their little room, and eight or nine shillings a week would not be badly spent for that purpose. The President alluded to the Act of

1834. It was time they had an entirely new Act. In 1834 a man was practically forced to live and die in his native village. The law of removability should be abolished, and the principles of rating should be altered. They ought to make the State collect the poor-rates and the income-tax, and income, not landed and house property, should be the basis of contribution. Some of them shook their heads. It would touch them more than the present system. (Laughter and hear, hear.) It would also touch him more, but for the good of the community he would welcome the reform. (Cheers.)

The Rev. Mr BRIDGE (Macclesfield) said he came there as the friend of the poor, and he could claim to have been one of the first to show that it was possible to distinguish between the deserving and the underserving poor. He would not have got up to speak, but that Mr Leach, who spoke without any sort of logical thread through his remarks, seemed to need a definition, the distinction between private charity and public relief. They were apt to forget the great general principles upon which the Poor Law of 1834 was founded. At that time it paid better to be on the rates than to be an industrious person, and property was almost swallowed up in poor rates. The general principles were, and they had never been gainsaid, and they never would be, that the lot of the pauper should not be better than the lot of the independent working class. Within those limits they could do a great deal. Dr Rhodes asked them to spend 17s. 6d. per week upon each pauper child, but what about the lot of the person just above it in the social ladder. It could not be done. There was a period of sentimentalism throughout the reign of George III., and at the end of that period pauperism was eight times what it was at the beginning. When once the poor tasted out-relief they could not give it up. Every man under the Poor Law had a right to say to the Guardians, "Let me live;" and the Guardians could say, "You shall live, but not so well as the working classes outside."

Dr RHODES said that Mr Leach referred to a paper by him. He did say that where out-relief was lowest, wages were lowest, and that where relief was highest, wages were also highest. How far that was cause and effect he was not prepared to say. He still maintained that in rural parishes the character and circumstances of applicants for out-relief could be ascertained by the Board. With regard to Mr Bridge's remark, he did not say that the cost per head of the children abroad was 17s. 6d. It would be nearer 10s. than 17s. 6d. a week.

Mr J. WINSTANLEY (Wigan) said that on the previous day he was very busy getting coal to make them comfortable; that day he was there "to give them advice." That assembly was the grandest sight in the two counties that day—a body of practical Christian workers banded together to consider how they could help the poor and needy. He was glad to have the opportunity of speaking to such a number of respectable people—doctors, and lawyers, and manufacturers, and others. Let every Guardian deal with the cases he was personally

acquainted with, and then he would know he was not working in the dark. Let there be a small committee in each district, so that justice might be done to all applicants, and do not let justice be represented by a dole of half a crown a week. (Hear, hear.) If a woman was so unfortunate as to have a worthless husband who was committed to prison, she should not be treated as though she was as bad as her husband. Lastly, the receipt of relief ought not to deprive a person of his right to vote. He wanted to be the last speaker, and he believed he was. (Laughter, and hear, hear.)

The PRESIDENT said he desired to thank the reader of the paper for the ability he had shown in its preparation, and in doing so he desired also to say that he was very glad to welcome the last speaker. It was only by hearing different opinions that they could come to a right conclusion. Manchester had been put in the pillory by some of the speakers. At the same time he thought Manchester stood on a pretty good pedestal. With respect to the other speakers, he was sorry to hear Mr Darlington, who seemed to him to be too old to mend. (Laughter.) He fancied Mr Darlington was of opinion that the Wigan Board of Guardians was the most perfect Board in the kingdom; he thought they had got a good deal to learn, although they did good work. If there was one thing that Guardians agreed in, whether town or country Boards, it was this, in thinking their own Union the most perfect. It was most valuable for the Guardians to attend such Conferences, and rub against one another, and get to know that there were two sides to every question. He was personally in favour of strict administration. They might carry it too far, but his experience showed him that it had had very good results. At the same time he was not one of those who said that a hard and fast line should be drawn against out-relief. There were many cases where it was most desirable in the interests of humanity that out-relief should be granted. At the same time there was out-relief and out-relief. That which was carelessly given did a great deal of harm. He hoped they would do their best to carefully administer it in their respective Unions. (Cheers.)

The Conference was then adjourned.

SATURDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER.

Sir JOHN HIBBERT said that the first business on the agenda was to decide where the next Conference should be held.

Dr RHODES moved that it be held at Liverpool, and this was carried unanimously, no other place having been suggested.

On the election of representatives to the Central Poor Law Conference, the name of Mr Whittaker, of Burnley, was proposed by a member, who eventually withdrew the proposition. Mr Hagger, Hon. Sec., who was one of the gentlemen nominated, stated that he

was willing to withdraw. In the result, Dr Rhodes, Mr Hagger, and the Rev. Canon Hignett were elected as representatives.

Mr HORN, Clerk to the Guardians, Burnley Union, read the following paper :—

LOCAL RATES AND ASSESSMENT.

BY MR J. S. HORN,

Clerk to the Guardians, Burnley Union,

AND

MR H. P. CLEAVER,

Clerk to the Guardians, West Derby Union.

THE chief object of the writers of this paper is not so much to convey information as to give rise to a practical and suggestive discussion of the important subject of Local Taxation and Assessment—a subject specially important at the present time, when a Royal Commission is sitting for the purpose of obtaining evidence and ultimately reporting on the following among other questions, namely—(1) On the system adopted in making the Valuation List for each parish ; (2) on the principles adopted by the Assessment Committee in dealing with the Valuation List, and in determining the gross estimated rental and rateable value of different classes of property ; (3) as to the method of levying and collecting rates in the Union ; (4) as to whether any change is desirable either in the method of preparing the valuation, of the authority who should discharge that duty, or of the authority by whom the rates should be collected ; and (5) whether and how far all kinds of real and personal property contribute equitably to such taxation, and if not, what alterations in the law are desirable to secure that result.

One of the most important matters incident to local finance is the settlement of the Valuation List for Poor Law purposes, since that list is taken for the great

majority of local rates—*i.e.*, for the poor rate and for others levied on the basis of the poor rate, including borough and sanitary rates. The following is a brief outline of the ordinary mode of valuation under the Union Assessment Acts, 1862 to 1880, which apply to all parishes in a Union formed under the Poor Law Amendment Acts.

The Valuation List of a parish is a statement of the gross estimated rental and rateable value of all the rateable property in the parish. By the Parochial Assessment Act of 1836, every poor rate must be made “upon an estimate of the net annual value of the several hereditaments rated thereunto—that is to say, of the rent at which the same might reasonably be expected to let from year to year, free of all usual tenants’ rates and taxes, and tithe commutation rent-charge, if any, *and deducting therefrom the probable average annual cost of the repairs, insurance and other expenses, if any, necessary to maintain them in a state to command such rent.*” This is the “rateable value.” Every valuation must also show the “gross estimated rental,” which by the Act of 1862, sec. 15, is required to be calculated in the same way, but without the deductions indicated in italics above. “Rateable hereditaments” include land and buildings, railways and canals, gas and waterworks, mines and quarries, woods and plantations, sporting rights, and tithe rent-charge.

The settlement of the Valuation List of a parish includes three stages, namely—

- (1.) The preparation of a list by the Overseers of the parish.
- (2.) The confirmation or correction of the list by the Assessment Committee.
- (3.) Appeals to the justices in special sessions and quarter sessions, and to the High Court.

As regards the constitution of the Assessment Committee under the Act of 1862, the Guardians of

every Union formed under the Act of 1834 must annually appoint an Assessment Committee out of their own members. The number may be from six to twelve. If the Union is conterminous with a municipal borough, the council of the borough may, on the invitation of the Guardians, appoint an equal or less number of councillors to be members of the committee.

The Overseers in every parish prepare a list, which is ordinarily a copy of the last approved Valuation List, with such alterations (if any) as the Overseers think proper to make. This list is deposited in the parish for inspection during fourteen days, and notice of the deposit is published. It is then transmitted to the Assessment Committee. Within twenty-eight days from the notice of deposits, any aggrieved person or the Parish Council of any aggrieved parish may give notice of objection to the committee and to parishes and persons affected by the objection. The objection must be on the ground of unfairness, incorrectness, or omission in the valuation. The Assessment Committee hears and determines the objections. It may also, with or without objection, and at any time and on any information, make such alterations as it thinks fit, and may employ a person to value generally or in any special case. When satisfied, the Committee approves and signs the list. If it has been altered, it is re-deposited, and comes back to the committee for a fresh hearing and approval. Also, if any alteration is made necessary by the decisions of special or quarter sessions, the committee alters the list accordingly. Finally, it adds up the totals of gross rental and of rateable value, and approves and signs the list and delivers a copy of it to the Overseers, and also sends the parish totals of gross rental and rateable value to the Clerk of the Peace. The list as so approved and delivered becomes "the Valuation List in force," subject to supplemental lists which may from time to time be

made and approved in like manner. The Valuation List, as so settled, becomes the only legal basis for the poor rate and for any other rate leviable on the basis of the poor rate ; but it is not binding for the purpose of imperial taxes or the county rate.

At this stage it may be convenient to discuss the question as to whether any change is desirable, either in the method of preparing the Valuation List, or of the authority who should discharge that duty. As a result of considerable experience and widespread inquiries amongst gentlemen having a large and practical knowledge of the subject, we are decidedly of opinion that the preparation of the Valuation Lists cannot be in better hands than those of the Overseers, who generally have an amount of local knowledge of the greatest value in the preparation of the lists. It must also be borne in mind that a salaried valuer may be appointed to assist the Overseers and the Assessment Committee. The method of preparing the Valuation Lists and the publicity given to the same calls for no change.

The Poor Law Union or separate parish maintaining its own poor has proved an admirable and convenient area for assessment purposes, and the appointment of the Assessment Committee by the Guardians has hitherto worked remarkably well and successfully. Suggestions have sometimes been made that Corporations and other Sanitary Authorities should appoint their own Assessment Committees. This would simply result in a further multiplication of authorities without any probability of the work being more efficiently done. The Sanitary Authorities are generally the owners of rateable property, such as gas and water works, sewage works, free libraries, baths, tramways, town halls, and other municipal buildings, and the temptation to under assess these properties might prove, as in the case of Government property, almost irresistible. It is notorious that Crown property is

valued by the Government at a much lower amount than other classes of property of a similar character. Crown property is exempt from rating, but the Government give a contribution in lieu of rates, the amount being based on their own valuation. Such exemption should be abolished. Guardians who now appoint the members of Assessment Committees are in their corporate capacity the owners of very little rateable property, and thus the temptation to under assess their own property is reduced to a minimum.

There should be but one assessment for all purposes, whether imperial or local. As previously pointed out, the Valuation List is not binding for the purpose of imperial taxes or the county rate. This could, however, be remedied by giving the Surveyor of Taxes a seat on the Assessment Committee with a right of appeal.

The Union Assessment Committee Act of 1862 would be improved by being amended on the lines of the Valuation (Metropolis) Act, 1869. This latter Act differs from the former in the following principal respects :—

1. The Overseers are to send a copy of their lists to the Surveyor of Taxes, who sends his corrections to the Assessment Committee (sec. 8), and his figures are to be inserted unless proved wrong (sec. 53), and he may appeal (secs. 18, 32).

2. The Overseers are to give notice to occupiers of alterations in their valuations (sec. 9).

3. A valuation lasts for five years, but provision is made for an annual revision, and for the insertion of new buildings (secs. 43-47).

4. The approved list is made conclusive as regards valuation for nearly all rates and taxes, and for juror and other qualifications under various Acts of Parliament (sec. 45).

5. A maximum scale of deductions from gross is laid down (sec. 52).

6. Owners and occupiers may be required to make

returns of values, charges, &c., under a penalty, in the same way as for income-tax (secs. 55-58).

The practical effect of this improved system of valuation is shown by comparing the income-tax and poor-rate valuations in recent years inside and outside London. In the Metropolitan Unions, the income-tax and poor-rate valuations are identical, while in the Provincial Unions the poor-rate valuation is as a rule considerably less than the income-tax valuation.

One of the most difficult questions which Assessment Committees have to deal with at the present time is the assessment of tied public-houses. The rent paid by the occupier of a tied house to a brewer is utterly illusive as to its value. In any case rent is only presumptive evidence of value. So also the amount paid by a brewer for a public-house affords no conclusive evidence as to its value for rating purposes. In the latest case, *Dodds v. South Shields Union Assessment Committee*, decided in the Court of Appeal, on the 1st May 1895, the Lords Justices Esher, Smith, and Rigby decided that in the absence of special circumstances, in order to arrive at the rateable value of a public-house, tied or otherwise, evidence of the weekly takings is not admissible.

The Master of the Rolls, in the course of a lengthy judgment, said: "The question is not what a tenant would give for the business carried on in the house or tenement; it is what he would give by way of rent for the house or tenement itself. There is a well-known and well-established mode of determining that question, and it is obviously the best mode where it can be adopted. To inquire what a particular tenant has given or what another particular tenant might give would be to go into a question which is really immaterial, because it is not the proper one by which to determine the only question which has to be determined, and that is what an ordinary tenant would give. Therefore it is admitted that in dealing with inhabited

houses or ordinary business premises, the mode of determining the question is by inquiring what rent is given for similar premises in similar positions in the same place. When the inquiry is what a tenant is likely to give, the question either of his gross earnings, or of his net earnings, or of his profits, is and must be wholly immaterial, and it is in fact mischievous and oppressive. So that such evidence where you can get the ordinary evidence ought to be rejected, not only on the ground that it is wholly immaterial, but also on the ground that to allow it would be oppressive and unfair."

Lord Justice A. L. Smith said that this was an attempt to incorporate into the ascertainment of the rateable value of a public-house certain exceptions which had been allowed to be incorporated into the ascertainment of the rateable value of certain other hereditaments. Having gone through the facts of the case, his Lordship said that what a tenant had actually made or lost in a house was *nihil ad rem*. The contention was as preposterous as it could be. He thought that there was no reason for saying that this was an exceptional case with regard to ascertaining the value. It was a case of daily occurrence. In his opinion, the Chairman was quite right in allowing the objection. The Queen's Bench was right, and the appeal must be disallowed.

Lord Justice Rigby said he was of the same opinion. The only question raised, and no doubt deliberately raised, was whether the mere fact of the house being a licensed house took the case out of the ordinary rule adopted for assessment. All the suggestions about the differences between free and tied houses were beside the mark. No doubt there were differences, and no doubt experts would be able to take those differences into consideration in giving an opinion as to what the value of a particular licensed house was, as compared with other licensed houses. But not a

suggestion was made of any distinction between this and any other property except that the license was attached to it. He did not think it approximated to the cases which had been allowed as exceptional. There was no difficulty in comparing this public-house with other public-houses in the same town, or perhaps in other towns, of a similar character. The exceptional cases were ruled by necessity, as the only alternative there was that the hereditament could not be assessed. But it could not be said that the mere granting of a license to a public-house established any such difficulty, or afforded any reason for an exceptional treatment of the case.

As bearing on the question it may be stated that in this county (Lancaster) quite recently public-houses, valued a few years ago by a highly competent valuer, appointed by an "up-to-date" Assessment Committee, have been sold by public auction for the following amounts, namely, Railway Hotel and four dwelling-houses, £20,500, rateable value of hotel £178. 10s., rateable value of houses £6 each; "General Gordon" and three cottages, £12,200, rateable value of hotel £51, rateable value of houses £3 each; Royal Hotel, £17,100, rateable value £93. 10s.; Forest Inn, £5,225, rateable value £42. 10s.; White Swan Hotel with two cottages adjoining, £5,200, rateable value of hotel £35. 15s., total rateable value of cottages £4; Bank Top Inn and two adjoining cottages, £5,950, rateable value of inn £40. 15s., total rateable value of cottages £10. 5s.; Derby Hotel, £2,050, rateable value £30. 10s. The total amount of the day's sale (29th July 1897) realised £68,225, total rateable value £519. 15s. It is not surprising, therefore, that an uneasy feeling prevails amongst rate-payers as regards the rating of public-houses. Assessment Committees, however, have to administer the law as it is at present, and in accordance with the rulings of the judges. Until the law allows public-houses to

be exceptionally valued, as in the case of railways, tramways, and docks, the best course for an Assessment Committee to adopt is to employ a skilled man to value all the public-houses within their jurisdiction, and to act without either fear or favour, affection or ill-will. Ratepayers should also pause in their condemnation of Assessment Committees as regards the rating of public-house property, bearing in mind that appeals are very costly affairs, even to the winning party.

RATES.

The principal sources of revenue of local authorities are the poor rate, the county rate, the borough rate, the general district rate, and the School Board rate. The designation "poor rate" is misleading, and ought to be changed, as a large amount obtained by that rate is not devoted to the relief of the poor, but to sanitary, highway, education, and other purposes. As a general rule, rates are levied uniformly on all descriptions of real property. Watching and lighting rates are, however, chargeable only on one-third of the full rate in the pound when levied in respect of land; so also sanitary rates in urban districts, and those for special sanitary purposes in rural districts, are chargeable in respect of agricultural land, tithes, railways, docks, and canals on one-fourth only of the rateable value. A further concession has been made to the occupiers of agricultural land by the Agricultural Rates Act, 1896. Put shortly, the objects of the Act are to relieve agricultural land from nearly half the burden at present imposed on such land by the poor rate, and to provide for the making of such subventions to local authorities from imperial funds as will secure that only a small part of the burden from which agricultural land is thus relieved shall fall on other classes of property. The general effect of the Act is to relieve the occupier of "agricultural land" at the expense of the taxpayer,

who provides imperial revenue. It is very unlikely that the annual grant from imperial funds will equal the deficiency caused by the partial exemption of agricultural land from rating. The difference, therefore, will have to be supplied out of the local rates to which the partial exemption applies. Hence it is not at all improbable that Hodge, the labourer, may have to pay rates in order to relieve his employer from the full payment of his rates. A further modification has been introduced by the creation of the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund in 1867. Each of the thirty-two London parishes or districts contributes to this fund in proportion to its rateable value, and receives from the fund in return a grant in aid of certain classes of expenditure, the grant being proportionate to that expenditure. The effect of this arrangement is that the wealthier districts, having a high rateable value and low expenditure, are taxed to assist the poorer districts where the situation is reversed. Having regard to the manner in which the poorer classes are massed together in certain quarters of London, the wealthier classes being chiefly resident at the West End, this appears to be an equitable arrangement. It is idle for the rich and aristocratic parishes of the West End of London to disclaim responsibility for the relief of the poor in the East End.

The principle embodied in the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund has recently received a wider application by the passing of the London (Equalisation of Rates) Act, 1894. This statute provides for the formation of a fund, to be known as the Equalisation Fund, by the London County Council, its amount being equal to a rate of 6d. in the £ each year on the rateable value of London, the distribution of the sum thus raised being made in the shape of grants to the sanitary authorities on the basis of population. As a consequence of this measure, the City of London pays a large amount to the sanitary expenses of the less

wealthy and more densely populated portions of the metropolis. The grants payable under this Act are made dependent upon the efficiency of the sanitary administration of the local authorities.

It seems not at all improbable that the principle upon which the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund and the London Equalisation of Rates Fund are based is destined to have a still more extended application in the future.

The general provisions of the rating Acts with regard to the levying of rates are based upon the presumption of the liability of the occupiers, and, with few unimportant exceptions, it is from the occupiers alone that payment can be exacted under the general compulsory powers thereby created. Owing, however, to the great difficulty of collecting heavy rates from poor people otherwise than in the rent of their dwellings, the Legislature has considered it expedient to give a discretionary power to the local authorities to assess the *owners* of dwellings of small value, and to collect the rates from them, instead of the occupiers. Under this system, generally termed *compounding*, the owners are entitled to a deduction or abatement of 15 per cent. or 3s. in the £ from the rates to be paid by them. A further privilege is given to any owner who is rated in this way, namely, that of requiring the Overseers to rate him for all hereditaments of the prescribed description and value possessed by him in the parish, whether occupied by him or not, subject to a further abatement not exceeding 15 per cent. The total allowance, therefore, under the Act may amount to 30 per cent., or 6s. in the £, to be deducted from the rate. These provisions have been extended to the Borough Rate and Watch Rate, where such rates are levied by the Overseers (45 & 46 Vict. c. 50), and they are also operative as regards the County Rate and the Rural District Rate. Voluntary agreements may be entered into between the Overseers and

owners of property for the attainment of the like objects. The total abatement authorised is not to exceed 25 per cent. As might be expected, compounding is not extensively adopted in rural and semi-rural districts, chiefly on account of the excessive discount allowed to the owner. This valuable Act should be made compulsory, but with a much less abatement to the owner; but as regards voluntary agreements, the amount of the abatement may be safely left to the discretion of the Overseers. In large towns, but for the Poor Rate Assessment and Collection Act, 1869, large sums would be lost, owing to the great expense and loss that would be incurred if the rates on small tenements were collected from the occupiers.

In some boroughs where the corporation collect all their own rates, the commercial principle is introduced of allowing a discount of 5 per cent. to all who pay their rates within twenty-one days of demand. It is manifest, therefore, that those who unhappily live from hand to mouth, and are unable to pay within twenty-one days from demand, are taxed more heavily than their more fortunate fellow-townsmen.

One of the most important points in the whole controversy respecting local taxation is the question of the incidence of rates as between owners and occupiers. Few questions have been more stubbornly debated in England in recent years than that of the incidence of rates levied in respect of the occupation of houses. The subject has been considered by Mr Goschen's Committee in 1870, and by the Town Holdings Committee in 1886, and the five following years. The evidence given was in each instance strongly contradictory, and the reports presented were hesitating and inconclusive. We venture to think that as regards dwelling-houses at least the whole rate is paid by the occupier, and that if the law were altered, and the owner of the building or the ground-owner were made liable for the rate or any portion of it, the burden

would ultimately fall on the occupier in the form of rent. Houses are necessities of life, and the rent they will command is governed by the state of the market, as in the case of other commodities. Demand and supply in each locality determine their rent.

The subject of Betterment deserves a passing notice. A Select Committee of the House of Lords, specially appointed in 1894 to consider the subject, has defined "Betterment" as, in other words, the principle that persons whose property has clearly been increased in market value by an improvement effected by local authorities, should specially contribute to the cost of the improvement. The principle of Betterment is not a new-fangled idea, since it was embodied in legislation in England in an Act of 1662 for the widening and enlargement of certain streets in Westminster. The recent revival of interest in the subject in England is due to the initiative and energy of the London County Council.

As regards rating the owners of ground rents, we fail to see how the occupier would derive any benefit.

One other matter deserves a few words, namely, the relief of local taxation from national revenues. About twelve millions of money are now received in relief of local taxation, and it is frequently asserted that this leads to extravagance on the part of local authorities. The assertion is a sweeping one, and lacks proof.

Has not the time arrived when mining royalties and easements should be rated? and ought not horses, dogs, guns, and conveyances, when kept for pleasure and not for trade purposes, to be subject to rates? Ability to pay rates should not entirely be lost sight of. Parliament has recognised this principle both as regards the Inhabited House Duty and the Income Tax proper. The labouring and artisan population of our towns contribute an exceptionally large proportion of taxation, owing to the necessity under which they

live of spending one-fourth to one-eighth of their incomes in house rent and rates combined—a proportion far in excess of that similarly spent by the more affluent classes.

As a last word, we venture to express an opinion that there should be only one rate for all local purposes, to be collected by the Overseers, and thus brought under strict Government audit.

DISCUSSION.

The PRESIDENT said that Mr H. P. Cleaver was to have read a paper at the Conference, but that the paper they had just heard was the joint production of that gentleman and Mr J. S. Horn. He would, however, ask Mr Cleaver to open the discussion on the subject.

Mr H. P. CLEAVER said that the paper prepared, as the President said, jointly by his friend Mr Horn and himself, embodied their views upon the state of local taxation, but there was one point hardly touched upon sufficiently, and that was the agitation of the present time to transfer the powers, duties, and liabilities of Overseers into the hands of Corporations. To his mind, and he thought that of Mr Horn, they felt that that would be a most dangerous change. With regard to the application already made to the Local Government Board for the issuing of orders devolving the power upon Corporations, the Board had not always stood by their guns. The Union which he represented was not wholly within one borough, and consequently the Guardians were not in a position to have the appointment of Overseers, and the question arose as to who was to have the appointment, the Corporation of Liverpool or the Vestries? He did not wish to touch upon Vestry meetings, they all knew what they were; but he trusted the Conference would be of opinion that it would be a most dangerous thing for Corporations to take upon themselves the collection of rates. He questioned very much whether the audit would be as strict as it ought to be. (Hear, hear.) It might be said that Corporations were as honest as Boards of Guardians. (Laughter.) He dared say they were, but they might be tempted to jockey the balances. In Liverpool a proposal had appeared upon the agenda paper of the City Council that no rate whatever should be levied upon the libraries and museums. The proposal was thrown out by the Council, but it formed a slight index of what would happen if the Corporation had those powers conferred upon them. They might extend that idea to the tramways, electric lighting, water works,

and all the different properties they possess. He was strongly of opinion that the Guardians as a whole should protest against the change of authority. It might be said that the question was a personal one affecting the clerks to the Unions, but that was not so ; nothing would interfere with the working of the Assessment Committees except legislation, and with regard to the appointment of Overseers that did not affect the pecuniary position of the officers of the Union in any way. The Collectors under the Guardians had been proved to have done their work remarkably well. At the inquiry just held in Liverpool the Town Clerk stated that he had not one word to say against the manner in which they collected the rates ; that they collected a magnificent percentage, which he did not think would be exceeded if they were taken over by the Corporation, and that it could not be better done by anybody.

Mr DARLINGTON (Wigan) said that he was not aware, until the President stated the fact, that the paper was a joint production. It was a great novelty to have a joint paper. He supposed the authors were so borne down by the importance of the subject that they could not trust themselves to deal with it singly. Some years ago it was his privilege to read a paper before that Conference, assembled at Southport, and he came forward single-handed with a great number of propositions, which were most immoderately laughed at by Mr Horn. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) He expected that Mr Horn would have maintained his *status quo*. He was afraid they were treading on dangerous ground in advocating the abolition of the grand old office of Overseer. He would not mind if it was abolished to-morrow. He had been in touch with Overseers quite as much as Mr Horn had, notwithstanding that the latter was Clerk to the Burnley Union. They had moved a step towards the abolition of the office of Overseer, as the Overseers had now to be appointed by the Local Authority. He asked whether it would not be better for the ratepayers to have their interests placed in the hands of a Committee than in the hands of individuals. There was great room for improvement. Proper and timely intimation should be given to those whose assessments were altered, and everything should be done open and above board. He would be glad to hear the opinions of those present about the assessment of public-houses. They had no difficulty in that matter in Wigan, because they did not take the rent which the brewer charged to the tenant, but went to the highest source. They found out the rent payable by the brewer to the actual owner, and he maintained that was the real basis of the assessment. (Dissent.)

Mr R. KILLIP (Toxteth Union) said that as a member of the Liverpool Property Owners' Association, and a property owner himself, if the Guardians crushed the compounding owners with an excess of rates, or a too high assessment, the working classes themselves would have to suffer. (Hear, hear.) The property owners would have to raise the rent in accordance with the rates they paid. If

the working classes realised that, and understood that even if rates were paid in the rent they came out of their pockets, they would pay more attention to public affairs, and see whom they elected to public bodies. In that connection he characterised as "an iniquitous, persecuting, and expensive institution" the School Board. (Ironical cheers.) He condemned the "uncivilised and abominable" methods of Vestry meetings; and as an illustration said that Vestry meetings had been packed by brewers' draymen to suit their own ends. In regard to the assessment of public-houses, he was a temperance reformer, but he urged that they should not over-assess public-houses even if they did think the traffic "abominable." If they over-assessed those houses, sympathy would be created for the occupiers which would be hard to get over. If they took too harsh measures, the rebound in public feeling would cause their action to do more harm than good. If they were going to assess property for the amount of money passed over the counter, or paid for the business of the houses, not for the bricks and mortar, they should go to Castle Street, Liverpool, and assess those merchants who turned over their thousands of pounds, or paid perhaps £100,000 for the goodwill of a business carried on in premises worth only £300. He hoped the temperance party would not make that mistake.

Mr JOHN HOULDING (Liverpool) said the compounding of property was a point overlooked in the discussion. Since the Act allowing compounding was passed, workmen had come to live in better class houses than they used to live in thirty or forty years ago; they could afford to pay a little more. For 8s. 6d. a week a good class house of an up-to-date character could be had, and if they got that they could not compound. The assessment was up to £14 or £15, and the owner had to pay full rent and rates, and he did not get his 30 per cent. for collecting. (Hear, hear.) He thought the time had arrived when the Act of 1868 should be altered, and large towns like Liverpool and Manchester given power to compound up to the amount allowed in the Metropolis. There it was £20, in large cities it was £13, and in smaller places down to £8. The matter should be seriously taken up, and he hoped some mention would be made of it at the Central Conference.

Mr J. E. S. OLLIVE (Clerk to the Wirral Board) said that in the rural districts they had had great inequalities of rating going on for many years in regard to the county rates. The reason was that the County Councils assessed property on a basis of their own. He urged that the valuation lists of the Assessment Committee should be the basis of the county rate, and that if necessary the County Council should have a special representative on the Committee, with the right of appeal.

Mr DARLINGTON inquired what had happened to the resolution passed some years ago by the Conference after hearing his paper on a cognate subject? (Laughter.)

The PRESIDENT said that the resolution had probably had a

certain effect on the Local Government Board Office. (Hear, hear.) He thought he might say that there was an almost unanimous opinion in favour of some of the suggestions made in the paper—as, for instance, the want of a uniform system of valuation. (Hear, hear.) There had been at least twelve Bills brought forward by various Governments in past years in favour of that system, but unfortunately the Bills were never carried because of opposition from various quarters. He did not think if a Bill was brought in now there would be the same opposition, because circumstances had arisen which had made everybody—even former opponents—see the importance of a uniform system throughout the country. The London system had worked exceedingly well, and he trusted that would be the basis of the new Act. He spoke on that subject almost with bated breath, because he was a member of the Royal Commission, whose labours would be protracted for at least another year, which had that subject under consideration. The evidence which had been given from all parts of the country in favour of uniform valuation was almost unanimous. Therefore they might say that that must have its effect upon the Commission when they came to consider the subject. Mr Horn had given evidence before that Commission, and calling him had been a compliment to him and to the county. (Hear, hear.) As to the collection of rates, it was desirable there should be some more economical system of collecting. They had different officers going about doing work which one man might do, and a change in that respect would be a means of economy. The name of the poor rate should certainly be changed. The name did mislead people. When they demanded twenty millions a year, it was not all for the poor. The amount for the poor was about seven or eight millions. The School Board had been referred to, and he would point out to Mr Killip that the accounts of the School Board were audited by the same auditor who did the work for the Guardians. He only wished that the same method was adopted in municipalities. (Hear, hear.)

Mr KILLIP explained that he meant that the School Board expenditure was not checked in any way.

Mr HORN, in thanking the Conference for the way in which they had received the paper, said he had considerable sympathy with Mr Houlding about compounding.

PROPOSED TRAINING SHIP FOR THE MERSEY.

The Rev S. A. K. SYLVESTER brought up the following report:—

“The Committee appointed by the Conference to consider the advisability of placing a Training Ship for Poor Law boys in the Mersey, has passed the following Resolution:—

“‘That, whilst gladly recognising the benefits accruing from the establishment of such ships as the “Exmouth,” this Committee do not consider it advisable, under existing circumstances, to take steps for securing a Poor Law Training Ship for the Mersey, the facilities afforded by the “Indefatigable” and other similar ships being in the opinion of the Committee sufficient to meet the present requirements of the district. The Committee are pleased to be able to report that steps are being taken to have the “Indefatigable” certified by the Local Government Board for the reception of Poor Law boys, and that the Managing Committee are willing to receive such boys upon more favourable terms than could be hoped for in the case of a ship specially provided for the purpose.’”

In moving the adoption of the report, the Rev. S. A. K. SYLVESTER said that an objection to the proposal to put another Training Ship on the Mersey was that the expense would be enormous, and the Committee did not know how many Poor Law boys would be willing to enter such a ship. The Committee of the “Indefatigable” had some fifty or sixty vacancies, which they were willing to fill with boys sent from the various Unions of the North-Western District; and, as a tentative step, it had been thought preferable to utilise this accommodation before embarking upon any great outlay in providing another vessel. Should it be found that the demand for accommodation was greater than is anticipated, it would afford a very strong additional argument in favour of providing a ship of our own.

Dr RHODES, seconding, said that the Conference had achieved the object in view, namely, to provide a training ship for the Mersey without incurring any expense. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. S. A. K. SYLVESTER stated, in reply to members, that the age of suitable boys was from twelve to fifteen years, and that the cost per head would be on the average five shillings a week.

A Stockport delegate produced the correspondence between his Board and the Local Government Board on the subject of the period for repayment of the loan raised for the purpose of rebuilding the Workhouse. He contended that repayment should be spread over

sixty years, and not, as the Local Government Board insisted, thirty years.

Mr DARLINGTON said the same question might soon arise at Wigan, where the Guardians intended to build a new Workhouse. He moved that the Local Government Board be approached on the subject.

The PRESIDENT said he could not accept any motion on the matter, which had been sprung upon the Conference. It was solely a question between the Stockport Guardians and the Local Government Board.

The PRESIDENT proposed a vote of thanks to the Mayor of Blackpool, Councillor Ward, for his courtesy in receiving the delegates. This was seconded by Mr Moss (Liverpool), and carried.

The Rev. C. T. ROYDS proposed a vote of thanks to the President, who had taken the chair at twenty-three of the Conferences, and, he need not say, had always conducted the proceedings with ability and firmness. (Cheers.)

The vote of thanks having been carried with acclamation,

The PRESIDENT said he was very much obliged to them. It had been a great pleasure to him to meet the Guardians year after year, and especially, lately, to observe so many lady Guardians—no fewer than thirty on the previous day—when the proceedings showed that the ladies brought great ability to the discussion of the various subjects. He asked them to join in a hearty vote of thanks to the gentleman who, far more than the Chairman, was necessary to the success of the Conference, their worthy Secretary. Mr Hagger had been in that position now for many years, and he (Sir John Hibbert) regarded him as almost a permanent representative of the Conference. He hoped Mr Hagger would long be spared, not only to carry out his important work in Liverpool, but also as Secretary of the Conference. (Cheers.)

Dr RHODES said the motion needed no seconder—a better Secretary there could not be.

The vote of thanks having been carried with enthusiasm,

Mr HAGGER said that if the duties of the office of Secretary had been discharged to their satisfaction, he was thoroughly content. He could only thank them for their appreciation of the little he had been able to do.

The proceedings then terminated,

THE CARE OF GIRLS.

Sir J. T. Hibbert, Bart., K.C.B., took the chair at a meeting in connection with the Conference, to consider the provision made by the Girls' Friendly Society for the after-care of Poor Law girls. The meeting was attended by Guardians and other Poor Law authorities, including the Local Government Board Inspectors Mr Jenner Fust and Mr Moorsom ; many ladies, including the Hon. Mrs Campion, president, and Miss Grafton, Central Head Workhouse Department ; the Hon. Mrs Marshall Brooks, Mrs Wilbraham, of the Girls' Friendly Society ; Miss Olga Hertz, Miss A. Peel, Mrs W. Birley, Mrs Arnoux, Miss Hodgkinson, Mrs Haslem, Mrs Howard, Bolton Union ; Mrs Russell, Mrs Murgatroyd, Macclesfield ; Mrs Ashworth, The Fylde ; Mrs Massy, Chorlton ; Mrs Webb, Chichester ; Miss Cripps, West Derby ; Miss H. E. Booth, Toxteth Park ; Mrs Roberts, Bury ; Mrs Burnett, Mrs Frankland, Leigh ; Miss Rawson, Barton-upon-Irwell ; Mrs Bowen, Miss Smith, Preston ; Mrs Ainsworth, Mrs Heald, Chorley ; Mrs Leigh Oakshott, Mrs Hodgson, Wirrall ; Mrs Abraham, Mrs Miller, Birkenhead ; Miss Higham, Haslingden ; Mrs Tolmé, Mrs Holland, Miss Hollins, Ormskirk ; Mrs Armitage, Miss Atkinson, Bucklow ; Mrs Clay, Warrington ; Mrs R. Johnson, Mrs Philips, Mrs Alice Johnson, Mrs Hennessey, Wigan ; Mrs Haworth, Blackburn ; Mrs Usher, Prestwich ; Mrs Barrow, Miss Willis, Lancaster ; also Mr Hodgson, The Fylde Union ; Mr Killip, Toxteth Park ; Mr Crookhall, Lancaster ; and the Clerks to the Liverpool, Manchester, Salford, Lancaster, Toxteth Park, and Bury Boards of Guardians.

Sir JOHN HIBBERT expressed his great interest in the subject, and his hope that some of the leading Unions of Lancashire and Cheshire might act so as to induce other Boards of Guardians to take up this most important subject.

Miss GRAFTON said that at last the need for the after-care of girls had become self-evident, and it had been discussed at every Conference during the past two years. But who was to take the needful trouble ? Guardians and matrons were in many cases doing all they could. Practically, for twenty-three years, the M.A.B.Y.S., in the metropolitan area, and the Girls' Friendly Society elsewhere, with a few local Committees, had done all the rest. The following was a brief summary of the work for twenty years :—In 1877 they had 27 girls from the Workhouses ; in 1886 they had 1,660 ; between 1886 and 1896, 10,000 girls had been on the Girls' Friendly Society's registers. In 450 Unions out of 649, Girls' Friendly Society workers

were allowed to visit. Guardians often expressed their surprise at not hearing of this work—they would only hear of failures ; but until the recent adoption of the report forms to Guardians, the successes were not made known to them. Yet the saving in the rates, as well as all spiritual and moral benefits to the children, appear from these facts :—1 in 5 used to be returned to the Workhouses—to reduce this to 1 in 38 was considered a success some years ago—only 1 in 52 went back last year. To meet the needs of special cases, and in order that the Guardians and the Girls' Friendly Society might be brought into touch, a Central Committee had been formed. It was proposed to form small committees in Unions of the Society's workers and representatives of Boards of Guardians, as well as a Standing Committee in each of the Poor Law districts, to occupy themselves with the care of the girls, and on which the Guardians' advice and help would be of great value in all cases of difficulty as to training, sickness, or other needs. Most earnestly it was hoped that all Guardians would support the scheme presently to be sent out to Boards of Guardians.

The Hon. Mrs MARSHALL BROOKS, Mrs WILBRAHAM, and Mrs ANTROBUS gave interesting details as to work actually going on in the various Unions in Cheshire and Lancashire.

Mr KILLIP (South Toxteth) spoke strongly as to the need of preventive work for girls.

The Hon. Mrs CAMPION said that the Girls' Friendly Society, through its special workers for such children, gave them friendship which followed them from one place to another through commendations. The gratitude of the girls afterwards was often very touching. The members of the G.F.S. were of all denominations.

The following resolution was proposed by Mrs CAMPION, seconded by Mrs MARSHALL BROOKS, and carried *nem. con.* :—"That the Guardians present will be prepared to support scheme No. 1 or its alternative when they come before their respective Boards for consideration."

In conclusion, Sir J. T. HIBBERT said so far as he could help the work he would always be glad to do so ; and Mrs CAMPION pleaded with the Guardians to carefully consider the matter, not for the sake of the Society, which now numbers 200,000 women and girls of all ranks, but for the sake of the Poor Law girls.

North Midland District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

NORTH MIDLAND DISTRICT POOR LAW CONFERENCE
FOR THE COUNTIES OF DERBY, LEICESTER, LIN-
COLN, NOTTINGHAM, AND RUTLAND, HELD AT
LINCOLN, ON FRIDAY, 22ND OCTOBER 1897.

THE REV. C. C. ELLISON, *Chairman of the Lincoln
Board of Guardians*, PRESIDING.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference :—

DERBYSHIRE (9 Unions).

BAKEWELL—

Hacking, Rev. E.
Hawes, Alfred.

BELPER—

Diamond, James.
Pym, Joseph (Clerk).
Smedley, John.

CHESTERFIELD—

Shaw, G. (Clerk).
Pearson, F.
Hine, E. F.

LEICESTERSHIRE (11 Unions).

ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH—

Denton, Rev. Canon (Chairman).

BARROW-ON-SOAR—

Smith, J. S. (Chairman).
Wright, B.

BLABY—

Haine, Rev. J. (Vice-Chairman).

LEICESTER—

Holland, D. G. (Chairman).
Andrew, A. (Vice-Chairman).
Wilder, Mrs M.

MARKET-HARBOROUGH—

Danby, The Rev. C. E. (Vice-
Chairman).
Bragg, M. R.

RUTLANDSHIRE (2 Unions).

LINCOLNSHIRE (15 Unions).

BOURNE—

Hayes, W. (Vice-Chairman).
Bacon, W.
Bell, C. W. (Clerk).

LINCOLN—

Ellison, Rev. C. C. (Chairman).
Danby, W. B. (Clerk).
Laverach, J.

SLEAFORD—

Dixon, W. T. (Vice-Chairman).
Clements, E. (Clerk).
Bowling, J. D. (Chairman).
Cole, J. A. (Vice-Chairman).

NOTTS (8 Unions).

BASFORD—

Hanson, R. G. (Chairman).
Spencer, C. J. (Clerk).
Faulconbridge, W. F. (Vice-Chairman).

MANSFIELD—

Hibbert, G. H. (Clerk).
Morris, Rev. F. E. (Chairman).

MANSFIELD—*continued*—

Bonser, A. H. (Vice-Chairman).
Wilson, —.

NEWARK—

Neville, G. (Chairman).

NOTTINGHAM—

Howard, C. M. (Clerk).
Wright, J. (Chairman).
Lees, J. (Vice-Chairman).

SOUTHWELL—

Whiston, R.
Kirkland, G.

WORKSOP—

Emmerson, G.

VISITORS.

Strutt, Hon. F. (Hon. Sec. to the Conference).
Stevens, H., Local Government Board Inspector.
Chance, W., Hon. Secretary, Central Poor Law Conference.

The following Unions were not represented at the Conference :—

DERBYSHIRE. — Ashbourne, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Derby, Glossop, Hayfield, Shardlow.

LEICESTERSHIRE. — Billesdon, Hinckley, Loughborough, Lutterworth, Market Bosworth, Melton Mowbray.

RUTLANDSHIRE. — Oakham, Uppingham.

LINCOLNSHIRE. — Boston, Caistor, Gainsborough, Glanford Brigg, Grantham, Grimsby, Holbeach, Horncastle, Louth, Spalding, Spilsby, Stamford.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE. — Bingham, East Retford.

SUBJECT DISCUSSED.

CAUSES OF PAUPERISM, BY REV. WICKHAM TOZER, *Hon.*

Manager of the Labour Bureau, Ipswich - - - 399

DITTO, BY Mr HERBERT A. DAY, *Member of the District*

Council of St Faith's, Norfolk - - - 415

FRIDAY, 22ND OCTOBER.

The PRESIDENT read a letter from the Mayor of Lincoln, expressing regret that the Mansion House Banquet prevented him from personally welcoming the delegates.

The Deputy Mayor, Alderman MALTBY, acting on the Mayor's behalf, extended a hearty welcome to those present, and said he hoped their deliberations would have beneficial results.

The Rev. E. E. Morris (Mansfield), Canon Denton (Ashby de la Zouch), and the Rev. C. C. Ellison (Lincoln), were elected to

represent the Conference on the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences.

It was resolved to hold the next Conference at Leicester.

The Hon. F. Strutt was re-elected Hon. Secretary.

The Committee was re-elected, with the addition of the following members:—Rev. C. E. Danby (Market Harborough), Mr D. G. Holland (Leicester), and Mr A. Andrew (Leicester). It was suggested that the Committee should co-opt two lady members—Lady Laura Ridding, of Southwell, and Mrs Wilders, of Leicester.

The following papers were then read:—

CAUSES OF PAUPERISM.

BY REV. WICKHAM TOZER,

Hon. Manager of the Labour Bureau, Ipswich.

IT is refreshing to find a body of experienced administrators of the Poor Law setting themselves seriously to consider the causes of pauperism, and still more hopeful to see them trying to discover a remedy for it. As a rule, with very few exceptions, we have been more like doctors and nurses on the battlefield than like true statesmen, thinking, planning, and striving to prevent the people from being wounded, and made to clamour for succour. We have been so absorbed in administering relief, and in strenuous efforts to improve our methods, that we have left ourselves no time to consider the causes which make our labours necessary. We all admire the good Samaritan, but some of us would esteem his benevolence more if, in addition to his binding up the traveller's wounds and taking him to an inn, he had done something to rid the highway of the wild beasts who robbed and wounded him, and so make it safer and pleasanter for those who might pass that way in the future.

To-day we are not Samaritans but scientists, calmly, patiently, and persistently seeking to discover the causes of the poverty and misery that, in spite of the millions spent in private charity, and notwithstanding our unprecedented national prosperity, make legal relief necessary.

In the United Kingdom we have nearly a million paupers, and we spend about ten millions a year in relieving them, and when at the end of the year we have spent all these millions, we are still confronted with an equal number of destitute people, and the necessity of spending as many more millions in saving them from hunger and death. As one generation of paupers passes away another springs up to fill its place, and so, with insignificant variation, the appalling spectacle of want and misery continues. "The poor ye have always with you." Why? Destitution has many forms and many causes. Some of the latter are so obvious that it is not necessary to dwell upon them.

Intemperance is one of the most prolific causes of pauperism, and all honour to the heroes who are bravely striving to diminish the temptations to it, and endeavouring to make the path of sobriety easier for those unfortunate men and women who, cursed with the sad inheritance of a craving for stimulants, find it so hard to resist the temptations to gratify it which this Christian country licenses tens of thousands of brewers and publicans to place in their way.

Unemployment is a fruitful source of poverty. The unemployed may be divided into two classes—those who are able and willing to work but cannot find it; and those who will not work, and make their idleness an excuse for seeking relief.

Those who are able and willing to work but cannot find it. The best of men in all the avocations of life may, and often are, forced to be idle. But as they are the last to leave when trade is slack, and the first to be put on when it improves; and as many of them belong to trades unions and benefit societies, from which they receive two shillings a day when unemployed, very few of them become recipients of charity, and fewer still do or would receive legal relief. If we could elevate the inferior class of workmen to their high level of capacity, industry, and thrift, we as Guardians would have very

little to do. But even from the ranks of the most skilled and industrious of men there are some who sink into pauperism. If their forced idleness is prolonged, their unemployment pay ceases; they are then reduced to the level of those who are not equally capable or sufficiently thrifty to secure that form and measure of benefit. Now, suppose a man to earn from a pound to thirty shillings a week, his standard of living will be proportioned to his earnings, and beyond payment to his club he will have little or no opportunity of saving. Suppose him to be out of employment for weeks and months, what follows? He and his family must live, and to obtain even the bare necessities of life he must depend upon the charity or credit of some one—the landlord, the baker, and the grocer. To avoid overstraining their lenity, ornaments, furniture, and clothing are sold or pawned. Meanwhile he tramps from shop to shop, seeking and almost begging for work. Vague promises dishearten him, cold rebuffs maim his self-respect, hope dies in him, and despair is born. Then, when all his resources are exhausted, a child may sicken, or the wife fall ill or be confined, and dire necessity compels the man to make his first plunge into pauperism, and once in, swimming becomes comparatively easy. Now, the remedy for that kind of poverty is to shorten the period of unemployment, and I know of no better means of accomplishing that object than by the establishment of Labour Bureaux.

It has been my privilege to superintend the working of one for twelve years, and of finding employment for more than four thousand men, many of whom have been saved from destitution and pauperism. It often happens that when there is a congestion of labour in one place, there is a demand for it in another, and what is urgently needed is an agency, by means of which it may be removed from where it is not to where it is in demand.

A system of Labour Bureaux, affiliated with the

Labour Department of the Board of Trade, would be an inestimable boon to the working classes, and save many of the best of them from becoming paupers.

Another class which in much larger numbers become paupers are men engaged in seasonal trades and callings—painters, plasterers, brickmakers, and general labourers. In periods of slackness, and in ordinary winter seasons, many of those who follow these callings are forced into idleness, and when frost and snow are prolonged their numbers are considerably augmented. The labourers earn so little, and their work is so precarious and intermittent, that they live on the verge of poverty, and a few weeks' idleness renders them destitute. The other men who have trades earn good money when they are in employment, but many of them are thriftless, and make no provision for the weeks of idleness which they know from experience will inevitably overtake them in the winter, and although not so soon, yet as certainly as the labourers, they too become destitute.

Among all large classes of men there are always some who are able to address audiences, and, being full of force and audacity, they become leaders and agitators. They are experts in discovering grievances, and in making them if they cannot find them. Not always, but very frequently, they are the least worthy of the class to which they belong. They like talking and agitating better than working. In times of depression, and in the imperative suspension of work through the weather, these men find their opportunity, and they make the most if not the best of it. They raise their standard, and all the idle vagabonds who spend their time loafing in the streets, and a few from the ranks of the more industrious men who feel the pangs of hunger and see their wives and families wanting the necessities of life, readily follow it. They form processions, wander through our thoroughfares wailing, "We have no work to do." They make speeches in

which the number of the unemployed is grossly exaggerated, and the condition of those who are is painted with a very big brush and in very lurid colours. Sometimes they make their first appeal to the Mayor, if there be one, and if he is inexperienced and has more feeling than judgment, he may yield to their importunity and promise them work or charity ; but if he has in him a considerable blend of the serpent and the dove, he will probably say that the Guardians are the proper authority for them to apply to, and advise them to make their case known to them. If the Guardians are appealed to, many of them yield and give relief, some in one form and some in another. That is how unemployment leads to pauperism. In the year ending 1895, 16,199 males, classed as able-bodied, received outdoor relief, many of them solely upon the ground of their being unemployed. There are towns in the north where at the present time relief is being given to considerable numbers in consequence of the suspension of work among the engineers and the depression in the cotton spinning trade. I know towns where outdoor relief is given to the unemployed every winter, to many or few, whether trade is good or bad. Far be it from me to dam the stream of Christian charity, or to harden the hearts of the benevolent against the cry of distress. The really destitute need not and must not be allowed to starve. But is the only alternative parish relief or starvation for the unemployed ? I do not think so, and I am quite sure that the Guardians, and no other public body, can relieve them in any form without doing them more harm than good.

We as Guardians have no means of knowing how many among those who clamour for relief are unemployed, or how many there may be behind them who are silent and unobserved. It is impossible for us to sift the chaff from the wheat, and to relieve them indiscriminately would be fatal to the public weal. In several severe winters our Mayors have asked me to

analyse the applicants for work, and recommend those I thought fit to the authority for employment at specially provided labour. My experience in that line of business has convinced me that out of every thousand you will find 250 who from physical infirmities are incapable of doing any kind of work than can be made for them; 250 will not have the strength for hard manual labour; 250 could do it if they would, but they won't; and 250, or about one in four, may be both able and willing to get stones, break them, mend or sweep the roads, or any other kind of employment you may be able to set them to.

As Guardians it is impossible for us to make work without incurring considerable loss on the work done, placing ourselves in competition with the trade we embark in, and displacing other men who are employed in it.

There may be exceptional cases in which it may be necessary to relieve men who are destitute without a labour test, but speaking generally, nothing could be more disastrous to the men themselves. It deprives them of their votes, destroys their self-respect, saps their independence, encourages thriftlessness, and prevents their learning wisdom by the discipline of adversity.

How to save such men from becoming paupers is not a question that comes within the scope of our present inquiry, and the time at my disposal would not admit of our discussing it if it did; but I am convinced that the alternative need not be the giving of relief or starvation. Many men who follow seasonal callings and the great majority of badly paid labourers do not become a burden to any one when their work is temporarily suspended, and if those who periodically expect and almost demand public charity would follow their example, their manhood would be unimpaired, and we as Guardians would not be perplexed and troubled with their clamour for relief.

Of all the classes of paupers we have to deal with, the vagrants are the most troublesome and the most difficult. In spite of Acts of Parliament, notwithstanding all our skilfully devised methods of treating them, and whether trade be good or bad, their numbers do not diminish but rather increase. An army nearly ten thousand strong are perpetually roaming from one end of the country to the other, a terror to many, and a serious burden and nuisance to all. If by the severest tests and the most rigid enforcement of our lawful methods of repression their number is diminished in one Union, they are only forced to pass on to another. They do not forsake their vagabondage life, but wander on to places where the tests are less severe and the hospitality is more agreeable. Who and what are they, and what are the causes of their becoming such incorrigible and hopeless paupers? A few of them may be decent working men really seeking employment, but they are few and far between. Many of them have been in jail, and most of them ought to have been there. They have been guilty of various offences more or less serious, or they have lost their character through indolence, dishonesty, and intemperance, and have made no consistent effort to retrieve it. Parsons, doctors, lawyers, merchants, and traders occasionally help to feed the stream of vagrancy, and to keep it flowing.

It must have been observable to those who have studied the question that in recent years the majority of tramps have been young men of ages ranging from twenty to forty.

The army short service system is largely responsible for a considerable number of these men finding their way to our casual wards. After serving with the colours seven years they leave with £20 deferred pay. That is soon spent, and the men find themselves without money and without the means of earning any. They cannot rejoin their regiments, because a condi-

tion of their doing so is the refunding of this deferred pay, and as most of them have no trade nor any special knowledge of doing anything that any one wants done, they find it difficult to secure employment, and after few or many fruitless endeavours to obtain it, they finally drift into vagrancy. The best thing for such men, and the best thing for the country, would be to facilitate their return to the army; and when that cannot be done, the Government, public bodies, and employers of labour generally should either give or help them to find work.

With regard to the great majority of tramps, the steps by which they reach the abyss of degradation are in most cases as follows:—They are out of work, they cannot find it where they live; they hear of the possibility of its being obtained in some distant part of the country; sick of idleness, destitute, without hope where they are, they resolve to go elsewhere. If they belong to a trades union, they may receive 2s. a day and 6d. for lodgings for a month, two months, or at the most three months. Very few of these thrifty men find their way to our vagrant wards. But some of them do. The period during which they receive out-of-work benefit becomes exhausted, and if they do not secure employment they become destitute. The men who do not belong to trades unions start with very little money in their pockets, a vague idea as to where they are going to find employment, a feeble inclination to persevere in seeking it, and with very little care as to what becomes of them. Their money is soon exhausted, they find that the charity of their shopmates and others does not suffice to keep them going, and they inevitably gravitate to the Union House for rest, food, and shelter.

Now the common assumption is that these men are tramping the country in search of work. That is the only excuse for their existence as tramps, and the only ground upon which they have any claim upon

our sympathy and help. If they are not seeking work, their existence is a sham and a fraud, and their maintenance by rates and taxes is an injustice to the community.

From a very considerable experience with this class of men I venture to affirm that the last thing the majority of them wish for is constant employment. They may be willing to do a job, some of them, if you give them a shilling for sixpenny worth of work ; but they will not stick to it for a month or even a week. As to the few who may be willing to work, it might be impossible to prove it, but I am none the less convinced that not 10 per cent. of them find it by tramping. I have very rarely ever known instances of masters or foremen putting on a vagrant, even when they have had reason to believe they were good workmen. Their appearance, the fact that they have neither characters nor recent references, and the fact that they have come from "nowhere" and are going "nowhere" in particular, are sufficient to deter experienced employers from giving them a chance of proving their competency and worth. The assumption, then, that vagrants are honestly in search of work is false, and even if it were true, the method is a total and a disastrous failure.

I was one of a large number of Guardians who waited upon the Local Government Board to discuss the pros and cons of further legislation for the suppression of vagrancy. We were politely told that the laws already in force had never been generally acted upon ; that where they had been enforced the number of tramps greatly diminished ; and until Guardians uniformly availed themselves of the powers they already possessed, it was useless to attempt to enlarge them.

There is considerable truth and force in that contention. If we had the power to absolutely refuse to give them hospitality, or if there were colonies in different parts of the country where they could be

forcibly retained until they gave evidence of regeneration, the plague would very soon be stamped out.

Is there not a more excellent and humane way by which some at least may be saved from recruiting the vagrants' ranks? Is it impossible to intervene between their initial and final step into pauperism? Need we wait in hope for new enactments or for a uniform enforcement of existing laws before we attempt to prevent decent men from commencing a career which has proved fatal to so many of their class? My answer to these questions is, that I have personally saved hundreds of men from taking to tramping, and as briefly as I can I will tell you how I have done it.

If a man comes to me and says, I want employment, I cannot find it here, but I have reason to believe I could obtain it at, say, Leeds, Birmingham, or any other distant centre of industry, then having satisfied myself that he is capable of doing the work he professes to be able to do, and that his character and conduct are good, I send on particulars of the man to the firms where such labour as his is supposed to be in demand. I may get no reply, and may have to try other centres; but as a rule I do get replies, favourable or otherwise, and if it is to the effect that they are willing to give him a trial, then, to prevent his tramping the distance, I give him a railway pass, and make him sign an agreement to repay me the fare. If I know the man, I trust him; if I do not, I send the agreement on to the employer, and ask him to stop a shilling a week from his wages until he has the amount of the fare, and then remit it to me. I have a running account with the Railway Company, and they return me the passes I give the men, and I pay them every month. Taking one year with another, I do not lose more than from 5 to 10 per cent. of the money I advance.

If you could prevent the benevolent from wasting their sympathy and charity upon the vagrants, and

thus save them from fostering vagrancy, you would do more than any changes in the law and its administration could do to abolish it. But to accomplish that difficult object, you must convince the public that the assumption upon which it is based is false, that after more than fifty years of trial the system has proved a calamitous failure, and that you are prepared to offer the honest seeker after work a better and a safer means of getting to it.

Faulty administration is a prolific cause of pauperism.

All I can do to prove this in the time remaining to me is to state a few of the more salient facts which are based upon the authority of the Local Government Board, and have been confirmed by my own observation.

The contrast between one county and another as to the proportion of paupers to the estimated population is very noteworthy.

In Norfolk there are 47 per 1,000. In Leicester only 27. In Somerset it is 40. In Kent it is only 27; Suffolk, 38; Salop, 21; Lincoln, 35; Chester, 21. In Norwich it is 39. In Ipswich it is 17. Colchester with 30,000 population has more in-and-out paupers than Ipswich with 60,000.

Now for a few more samples as to ratio of expenditure per head of estimated population. In Hereford it is 7s. 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. In Durham it is 4s. 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. In Suffolk it is 6s. 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. In Norfolk it is 7s. 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. In North Midland Division it is 5s. 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ d. In the Northern it is 4s. 4d.

The contrast between the former and present rate of pauperism in Ipswich is very instructive. In 1870 we had three Relieving Officers, and a population of 37,000. Now we have only one, and an Assistant, while the population is 60,000. Then we gave twenty sacks of flour per week and £108 in money. Now, when the population is nearly double, we give 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ sacks of flour and £42. 9s. in money.

I will not labour the point. The facts are known and must be within the knowledge of you all.

But how are we to account for these striking contrasts? Norfolk is not poorer than Suffolk, nor can Lincoln be more indigent than Salop, nor Norwich than Ipswich. It is not the condition of the people, but faulty and not infrequently illegal administration that is accountable for these diversities.

I will not offend by naming the places where faulty methods in dispensing relief result in demoralising the people, but I may be permitted to mention a few defects that are only too familiar to most of us. Many Guardians, especially those who are novices to Poor Law work, think and say that no stigma should attach to and no disqualification should follow the receipt of relief, and they act accordingly.

They do not take sufficient care to ascertain whether the persons applying for out-relief are destitute, or what form and amount of assistance would best meet the necessities of the cases that come before them. They are not investigated by members of the Board, and beyond the information furnished by the Relieving Officer, they have nothing to guide them in administering relief. Many Boards have no Out-relief Committee, no defined rules—printed or written—and as every case has to be analysed and sifted before all the Guardians, it is impossible for them to avoid mistakes more or less serious. I know one very large Union which prides itself upon having none of these, and they point to their low rate of out-relief as proof of their wisdom. Well, it is an easy thing to say “No,” and absolutely refuse to help or succour the destitute, and by adhering to that form of procedure of course all the time and trouble of investigation might be saved. But by making that your rule you may sin against humanity, and be guilty of neglecting your primary duty, guarding the poor. You cannot cure

pauperism by closing your eyes to its misery and stopping your ears to its cry of distress.

In many instances Guardians do not consider it to be any part of their functions to educate the people in self-reliance and thrift, or to try and prevent pauperism. If they make any distinction between the man who has, and the man who might have, but has not, made provision for himself, it is to the disadvantage of the man who has. If a man applies for relief who has 6s. or even 3s. per week from his club, out-relief is often refused; but if a man has neglected his opportunities to insure against sickness, and has nothing, then, because he is absolutely destitute, he gets it.

We at Ipswich have a rule to this effect :—"Out-relief shall not be given to men under the age of forty-five, able to be removed to the Workhouse, who, not having been prevented by ill-health or other reasonable cause from so doing, have never belonged to friendly societies, or otherwise provided against destitution or sickness." An order for the House is all such thriftless men can hope to get from us. On the other hand, if a man has made provision for himself, and his club pay is insufficient to support him, the fact of his receiving sick payment would be no bar to his receiving relief, but the reverse; it would be given more readily and more liberally. Further, if a widow receiving relief has boys of an age to admit of their joining a club, we give her 6d. a week extra to enable them to do so. That is educational work, but it pays in the long run. If the thriftless man accepts the offer of the House, and his wife and family are left destitute, we sometimes give them out-relief. That may be an immediate loss, but it is a gain in the end.

We never give out-relief to able-bodied men. That does not force them into the House. Out of a population of 60,000, we seldom have more than a dozen such men in our House; often not more than half that

number ; and some of them are more or less physically or mentally incapable of hard work.

In many places relief is too readily given to women whose husbands have deserted them or are in prison. If the men know that their wives and families will be provided for by the parish, they will the more readily desert them. We give them no such encouragement. If anything must be done, we give the women and children an order for the House, and do our best to hunt and capture the villains who have deserted them.

Many Guardians give out-relief with the sole aim of preventing destitution, with the result that thousands remain paupers for months and years. By sending a sick man to a hospital, to a specialist, or to a convalescent home, the period of illness may be shortened, and relief become unnecessary. By assisting widows to purchase mangles or sewing machines, they may be made independent. Blind men may be taught a trade by which they may earn a living. At a very small cost we have recently removed three young men from our outdoor list, who, but for this method of dealing with them, would in all probability have remained paupers for twenty years or more. When relief must be given, it should be given in such a form and in such a measure, as will make the recipients of it self-supporting and independent in the briefest period possible. According to the Local Government Board Returns, there are thousands of orphans in our Unions, every one of whom, when they leave us, will be sent into the world with the stamp, the memories, and the demoralising taint of pauperism attaching to them. To foster paupers in this way is an effectual method of increasing their numbers and perpetuating the evils inseparably associated with the system. If Guardians would take a little trouble, many of the children who are forced upon their care might be placed with the relatives of the deceased parents. They should be vigilantly sought, and the alternative

of contributing to the support of the children or taking charge of them should be forcibly placed before them. When that fails, admission to an orphanage should be sought for them not so much with the view of saving the rates as saving the unfortunate children from being branded with pauperism. Speaking from experience, I have not found it difficult to get any number of girls into orphanages, and I have not often failed with boys.

Next to sickness, old age and infirmity are the most common causes of poverty. Out of a total of 600 to 700 in receipt of relief out of the House in Ipswich, one-third are old people. The majority of them are women. Their number would be considerably larger if we did not absolutely refuse outdoor relief to those who have or are living vicious lives, whether men or women. Before we open the door to the virtuous and most deserving, we exhaust every means to make their children contribute to their support, if they have any. By official and non-official interviews with them we endeavour to make them feel their responsibility, and to perform their duty to their parents. In very many instances we succeed, and by so doing we not only save the old people from becoming paupers, but we teach their children lessons in filial duty and thrift. It makes them think; it brings home to them the fact that if *they* would be independent they must anticipate and provide for *their* old age, and you thus save not one but many families from pauperism.

It is by these and other methods of administration that we in Ipswich have gained and maintained the desirable position of having the fewest paupers to population and the lowest cost per head of any Union in the eastern counties.

In nearly all our Unions sickness is the most prevalent cause of pauperism. More than half of the persons receiving out-relief in Ipswich are classified as

“sick.” Ignorance and neglect on the part of sanitary authorities, apathy and indifference to the laws of health, and the poverty which compels people to live in unsanitary dwellings and surroundings, are responsible for so many men, women, and children becoming a burden to the rates.

Medical relief is a much more serious thing than it appears to be, and the drift of public sentiment with regard to it is perilously retrograde. It seems a very small matter for a person to obtain an order for a doctor when he is ill, and to most people it would be inhuman to refuse it, even if we dared. But this apparently innocent step into pauperism is usually followed by medical orders for beef tea, milk, or stimulants, and many a decent man is made a pauper by receiving less than a shilling relief. There is no necessity for such a wholesale and reckless manufacturing of paupers, and there is less excuse for medical relief now than there ever was. Hospitals, infirmaries, dispensaries, and medical clubs are placed within the reach of all but the very poorest, and if we had the liberty to exercise our discretion in refusing this form of relief to many who apply for it, the number of paupers would be reduced by one-third in a very little time.

Indiscriminate marriages are a fruitful source of pauperism. Each after his own kind is a law of nature. In consequence of men's ignorance or wilful disregard of it, our Workhouses are largely populated with the halt, the lame, the blind, the diseased in body, and the infirm in mind. It is not only a blunder but a crime to permit the weak in intellect, and persons suffering from such hereditary complaints as distorted spines, scrofula, gout, pulmonary consumption, epilepsy, or blindness, to marry. In the interests of, not the rates, but of humanity, such marriages should be prohibited by law. Many are profoundly ignorant, others are wilful and selfish, and very few can be made to look at

the ultimate consequences of their actions. Society, therefore, should adopt measures to protect itself, and prevent men and women from entailing their loathsome and disabling maladies upon their helpless offspring, and making them a burden to the community.

I have only touched the fringe of this vast and difficult subject. More I could not do in the time ; better I might have done if I could have commanded quiet and leisure to present my thoughts in a fuller and clearer light, but I have done my best to give you a few of the observations and experiences gathered from forty years' labour among the people, and many years spent in Poor Law administration, which I trust may not be unworthy of your consideration.

THE CAUSES OF PAUPERISM.

BY MR HERBERT A. DAY,

Member of the District Council of St Faith's, Norfolk.

WHEN your Secretary requested me to prepare an essay as to the causes of pauperism, it seemed at first too deep a subject for the time at my disposal. Pauperism is so various in its aspects, and so widely extended, that the utmost scope your patience would allow would be far too limited to ascertain its final causes. But, as no good is ever done by running away, and much can be done by careful accuracy, I have determined, as briefly as possible, to place before you the causes which induced the statesmen of Queen Elizabeth's time to frame our first poor law, compelling independent householders to pay for the support of those who had before relied on voluntary charity. The first law which compels charitable contributions, under pain of imprisonment, is that of 1572 (5 Eliz. c. 3). But the first Act of Parliament dealing with this question, and which prohibits charitable gifts

under pain of imprisonment, is that of 1349 (23 Edward III. c. 7).

Between these two dates the whole history of the descent of the English independent peasant—farmer or labourer—to rate-maintained pauper, can be traced.

In 1348, nearly half-way through the reign of Edward III., when English yeomen archers were shooting down French knights at Crecy, when Wycliffe, the first of the Reformers, was studying at Oxford, and Chaucer, the first of modern poets, was a London schoolboy, English agriculture was mainly carried on by peasant farmers or by free labourers. Both of these were gradually being liberated from the ancient serfage. There were no paupers; and there had so far been no legislation either for, or against the poor. But in 1348 came the greatest social cataclysm that England has ever known. The Black Death swept off in about twelve months nearly one-half the whole population: immediately everything was changed.

From this time onward, instead of the peaceful industries of agriculture, growing corn for bread, and cattle for meat and clothing, the main purpose of the English landowner is to reduce his labour wage bill, evict the peasant farmers, enclose and occupy free pastures and rights of common. All this brutal theft and violence was done that sheep owners might reap, at smallest cost, the whole profits of the trade in wool with the Flemish, and later with the English weavers.

In the year after the Black Death, an eyewitness tells us that “the sheep and cattle strayed through the fields and corn, and there were none left who could drive them.”

In 1516, or a hundred and seventy years later, another eyewitness tells us that “the sheep that were wont to be so meek and tame, and so small eaters, now, as I hear say, have become so great devourers and so wild, that they eat up and swallow down the very men themselves. They consume, destroy, and

devour whole fields, houses, and cities. For look, in what parts of the realm doth grow the finest and therefore the dearest wool, there noblemen and gentlemen, yea, and certain abbots,—holy men no doubt,—not contenting themselves with the yearly revenues and profits that were wont to grow to their forefathers and predecessors of their lands, nor being content that they live in pleasure, nothing profiting, yea, much noying the commonweal, leave no ground for tillage; they inclose all into pastures. They throw down houses, they pluck down villages, and leave nothing standing, but only the church to be made a sheep house. Therefore that one covetous and insatiable cormorant, and very plague of his native country, may enclose many thousands of acres, the husbandmen are thrust out of their village, either by fraud or by violence, or by wrongs and injuries they be so wearied that they be compelled to sell all. And must needs depart away, poor, silly, wretched souls, men, women, husbands, wives, fatherless children, widows, woeful mothers with their young babes and their whole household, small in substance, and much in number, as husbandry requireth many hands. Away they trudge, I say, out of their known and accustomed houses, finding no place to rest in. All their household stuff, which is very little worth, being suddenly thrust out, they are constrained to sell for naught. And when they have wandered abroad till that be spent, what can they then else do but steal, and then justly, pardie, be hanged, or else go about begging. And yet then, also, they be cast into prison as vagabonds, because they go about and work not, whom no man will set on work, though they never so willingly proffer themselves thereto. For one shepherd or herdsman is enough to eat up that ground with cattle, to the occupying whereof about husbandry many hands were requisite.”

Some historians have appeared to conclude that these wholesale evictions and enclosures only took place

in Henry VIII.'s time, and that peasants and agricultural labourers were in great prosperity under the princes of Lancaster and York. The English Statute Book in no way bears this out. When nearly half the population was swept away by the Black Death, many a farmer and many a landowner must have found adjacent lands and pastures unowned and uncultivated, and have appropriated without hindrance an "unearned increment." But we know that appetite grows by what it feeds on ; and already in 1402 (4 Henry IV. c. 8), only fifty-four years after the plague, a statute runs: "Because daily the great persons of the realm do make forcible entries into other men's lands, and put out the possessors of the same, and also take their goods and chattels in manner of robbery [*Great Persons* accused in Parliament to their face of Robbery !], so that oftentimes they be in such manner put out, and of their goods and chattels spoiled, that they have nothing to pursue (prosecute with) for their rights. And so, by such forcible entrance and maintenance, the land-tenants and possessors be utterly disherited and undone." And for proof that "certain abbots—holy men no doubt"—were as great "cormorants" as those Sir Thomas knew a hundred years later, the same statute (cap. 12) forbids the annexation of vicarages. Wealthy abbots seized on adjacent glebe lands, and sent a brother from the monastery to conduct the routine services. But it is ordered that only secular priests (not monks) shall be ordained perpetual vicars, "to do divine service, inform the people, and to keep hospitality therein." But the popular voice was becoming too troublesome, and soon it was silenced completely in Parliament.

In 1429, some five and twenty years after this bitter complaint was enrolled among the laws of England, it is resolved (8 Henry VI. c. 7) that "whereas the elections of knights of the shire to come to the Parliaments have been made by very great and excessive number of people of small substance and of no

value," *i.e.*, all freeholders, leaseholders, or copyholders, the franchise is to be limited to forty shilling freeholders. As the yearly value of agricultural land was about sixpence an acre at this time, forty shillings would be the yearly value of an estate of nearly eighty acres. This would effectually exclude all the peasants who did not use hired labour, as well as all tenant-farmers; and from now till the time of Henry VIII. we hear no more directly of these ejectments, but the constant complaints of insurrections and tumults tell us that the country was far from being at peace.

At the commencement of Henry VII.'s reign, some sixty years later, 1488, the evil had grown to such proportions, that Parliament has become nervous for the safety of the realm from foreign aggression, so utterly have the sheep consumed the husbandmen. The statute (4 Henry VII. c. 19) declares that "great inconveniences daily doth increase by desolation and pulling down and wilful waste of houses and towns [*i.e.*, villages]; and laying to pasture tilth land, whereby idleness, ground and beginning of all mischiefs, daily do increase. For where in some towns two hundred persons were occupied and lived by their lawful labours, now there been occupied two or three herdsmen, and the residue fall in idleness. The husbandry, which is one of the greatest commodities of this realm, been greatly decayed, churches destroyed, the service of God withdrawn, the bodies there buried not prayed for, the patron and curates wronged, the defence of this land against our enemies outward feeble and impaired, to the great displeasure of God, to the subversion of policy and good rule of this land." The same complaints occur in statutes of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and finally in Elizabeth.

The fifth year of this queen is most remarkable. In it were passed three statutes, numbered 2, 3, and 4 consecutively, showing their close connection with each other. These contain the main causes for pauper

legislation, and the first great Poor Law as we know them at the present time. The first of these (5 Elizabeth, c. 2,) is "An Act for the maintenance and increase of tillage," and confirms these statutes of Henry VII. and Henry VIII., of which we have just heard the preamble — a proof that such "robberies" were still being committed "by the great persons of the realm." The second (5 Eliz. c. 3) is entitled "An Act for the Relief of the Poor," which I shall return to later; and the third (5 Eliz. c. 4,) is "An Act touching divers orders for Artificers, Labourers, Servants of Husbandry, and Apprentices." This is one of the last of those cruel statutes of labourers, which were another of those brutally oppressive measures by which the poor were robbed of every natural right by the landowners. After the social catastrophe of the Black Death, when nearly one-half of the labourers were gone, those left alive were in so great request that they naturally demanded higher wages. This the king, the greatest landlord of that time, promptly refused by a general proclamation, which was confirmed by an Act of Parliament in the next year. It was to the effect that all labourers must work for the same pay that they received before the plague, though all provisions were dearer; for the corn fields lay untilled, and the cattle had also been destroyed in great numbers. But provisions were to be sold at moderate prices, for everything must give way to the needs of "the gentle people," who found themselves "greatly impoverished." Now, though these statutes were frequently re-enacted with increasing severity, with fines, the stocks, the pillory, branding with hot irons, and imprisonment without trial, in order to prevent labourers, artificers, and small tradesmen from selling their labour or their goods freely in the open market, evasion could not be hindered so long as the labourer had any resources left. So long as he could cultivate a few acres for himself, from which he was gradually, as we know

driven out by the sheep, or by begging on the high-road,—though from the first there were the most stringent regulations against the compassionate almsgiver, as well as the poor beggar,—he would refuse to work at starvation wages. But when sheep-grazing had so completely taken the place of agriculture that there was no great need of the labourer, while his numbers had been immensely increased by evicted tenants and peasant farmers, then the landowners had him at their mercy. But they showed him none, as the following brief sketch of this statute (5 Eliz. c. 4) will clearly prove :—

Wages of all labourers, servants, and artificers are to be fixed yearly by the justices of the peace in their general sessions. As these gentlemen would be all employers, they would naturally keep them down to the lowest possible limit. We know that eventually when the labourer could not even live from day to day on these wages, still less provide for his parents or for his own old age, the ratepayers were compelled to contribute weekly to the support of able-bodied men in farmers' and landowners' employ, under the so-called Speenhamland Act. For the present the thin end of the wedge is only that ratepayers shall support the disabled workmen.

Then all working-men, from twelve to sixty years of age, and not otherwise employed, must serve at these fixed wages, under pain of imprisonment, at any employer's demand. Single women, from twelve to forty, must serve, and their children, from ten to eighteen, must be apprenticed to husbandry until twenty-one years of age. Work at the justices' wages or the stocks and the gaol was English labourers' portion in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and for more than two hundred and fifty years.

[One of the last assizes of wages is recorded to have taken place at Manchester in 1725.]

With so many evicted tenant-farmers wandering

about homeless, and the labourers either without employment, or working for starvation wages, we can now understand the causes of English pauperism as it was first enacted by legislative landowners in Parliament, and enforced by executive landowners in the country, in this Act (5 Eliz. c. 3) in the year 1563.

The Act commences with an order to ministers, with the churchwardens in every parish, and the mayor or head officers in the boroughs, to prepare and keep a register of all the inhabitants and householders, as well as of the poor and impotent in their parish or borough. On the Sunday before Midsummer day in each year ministers are to give notice at the end of divine service to come to church next Sunday to elect collectors for the poor. Penalty for omission by a minister of this duty is a £2 fine, for which his churchwardens may sue and distrain upon him.

The Sunday next after the collectors are appointed, when "the people are at church at divine service, they shall gently act and demand of every man and woman what they of their charity will be contented to give *weekly* towards the relief of the poor." This is to be entered in the registers.

Clause 3. Collectors who refuse to serve are to be fined £10.

Cl. 4. Churchwardens who neglect to sue them for this are to be fined £20.

Cl. 6. The collectors are to render quarterly accounts, or be imprisoned without bail until they render them.

Cl. 7. Any one who shall refuse to contribute weekly to the poor after being gently asked at divine service in church, shall be "gently exhorted by the minister and churchwardens; but if he will not be so persuaded," the bishop shall send for him "to induce and persuade him by charitable means and ways, to extend his charity to the poor." But if "of his froward and wilful mind he shall obstinately refuse" to give weekly to the relief of

the poor, the bishop shall bind him over in the sum of £10 to appear before the next general sessions. But if any "such obstinate person" shall refuse to be bound, the bishop shall have authority to commit the said obstinate person to prison without bail until he become bound.

Cl. 8. At the general sessions, the justices or the mayor "shall charitably and gently persuade and move the said obstinate person" to contribute. "And if he or she shall obstinately and wilfully stand in the same, or not be persuaded by them, then it shall be lawful for the justice of the peace or mayor, with the churchwardens of the parish, to assess every such obstinate person so refusing, according to their good discretions, what and how the said obstinate person shall pay weekly towards the relief of the poor in the parish where he or she may dwell. And if they refuse to pay this weekly assessment, they are to be committed to the prison—to the nearest gaol—there to remain without bail until they have paid their assessment, together with the arrears, if any such shall fortune to be."

Here we have the fountainhead of all subsequent rate-aided charity.

Between a statute for the restraining wholesale reduction of arable land to pasture—evidence of the decreasing market for agricultural labour—and another for compelling all labour to be sold at the employer's price, we find every householder compelled by the nobles and great commoners to support worn-out and disabled labourers by weekly contributions under pain of imprisonment. Small wonder that the minister who had seen his poor people evicted, and the small shopkeepers, whose most constant customers were being ground into hopeless poverty, had to be threatened by these heavy penalties before they would submit to support the workmen of the landlords and their tenant-farmers.

Thus we have followed the English labourer from his proud position in the reign of Edward III. of independent peasant, with or without land, with all the rights and privileges of an English citizen—the right to be tried by a jury of his peers, the right to elect a delegate to Parliament, paid for his services, and therefore not necessarily a rich man, able to sell his labour in the open market, or cultivate his land without let or hindrance—down to the absolute deprivation of all these real “rights of man,” under Queen Elizabeth.

He was then almost a pauper, bound to toil for the first man that demanded his services, or those of his son or daughter, at wages fixed by a council of his employers under severe penalties for refusal.

This was his position three hundred years ago. Is it much better to-day?

He cannot be tried by a jury of his peers, for a jurymen must have a rating qualification of £20 a year. He is to a great extent disfranchised, nor can he easily be represented by men of his own class in Parliament.

He is gradually, and with great self-denial and difficulty, winning the right to sell his labour freely to whom he will. But he has small chance, under our present land laws and customs to be able to own or occupy any portion of the land he lives and works on. In every way he is far worse off than in the reign of Edward III.

Small wonder if in his dependent condition he is constantly looking to absolute dependence on the State for sustenance for his children or for himself in sickness or old age.

How can we best render him independent and free once more?

Shall we not seek the remedy for the present enormous evil of pauperism by removing its causes?

When the English labourer shall once more become a free citizen, with all his privileges restored to him, and allowed free access to the land he loves, then we may hope that he will realise a far happier position than that of dependence on compulsory rate-aided support from those who have derived no profits directly from his labour.

And while we discourage every attempt to throw the burden of the maintenance of any part of the community on the rest, let us all unite in building a free, equal, and independent commonwealth upon a strong foundation of equal rights and privileges for all.

DISCUSSION.

The discussion was opened by

Rev. E. E. MORRIS (Chairman of the Mansfield Board). He said it was clear from Mr Tozer's paper that a lax administration of the Poor Law did more than anything else to create paupers. He thought that a man ought to be kind and humane in all his duties, but he thought that Guardians of the poor should remember that they had a duty to the ratepayers as well as to the poor. He held in his hand the report of Mr Stevens on the district represented by that Conference, and Mr Stevens told him that he could not see to what cause the high figures for 1896 might be attributed except a desire on the part of Guardians to be liberal, and a growing dislike to offer the poor the workhouse. He believed Mr Stevens was right. The history of pauperism showed that lax administration of relief led to an increase of pauperism. The period of the greatest pauperism in this country was prior to the year 1834. In that year only two millions were spent on relief, but in 1817 seven millions were expended in that way. The same thing would be found in those counties to-day where there was a tendency to administer relief in a lax fashion. He was glad to have that opportunity of urging the Guardians present to regard the administration of relief as a public matter, and that they should be as careful as if they were administering money that came out of their own pockets. Speaking from his own experience, he asked how it was that they never came across a railway man asking for relief—how was it that they never saw a railway man's child in the workhouse? Was it because railway men got very good wages? It was because the railway men were a thrifty race. Recently addressing a gathering of railway men, he said that one thing had given him great pleasure—that he had never come across a railway man or a railway man's child in the workhouse.

One of his audience said it was because there had never been such a thing. If a railway man died, his children were provided for by the Society. If the railway men could do that, why could not the cotton operatives, the ironworkers, and the miners, many of whom got a great deal more money than railway men? They did not make provision because they had come to think that they could get enough from the Guardians to enable them to live in comparative comfort. If they were consistent in granting out-relief, he did not think they gave half enough. He would rather give a man ten or fifteen shillings a week for a few months, and enable him to tide over a crisis, than give him three or four shillings a week for the rest of his life. He was not going to discuss the great drink question. They all knew drink was the root of pauperism. A large number of men who spent sixpence a day in drink would think twice if they knew that they would have to go into the workhouse when their working day was over. He was perfectly convinced that the root of a great deal of pauperism was the terrible condition of the dwellings of the working classes. There were villages which seemed to the ordinary observer a perfect ideal of beauty, but which contained hovels of absolute corruption. He had in his hand a letter from a friend, who resided on the estate of a man of immense wealth, and it described the unspeakably immoral manner in which many of the cottagers lived. In one cottage having two rooms there were three sisters, two unmarried, with illegitimate children, and the third deserted by her husband, and these women had five grown-up sons and daughters living with them, and one of the sons was married. It was the right and the duty of Guardians to see that this kind of thing did not exist. The disgusting immorality of such conditions of life must bring people sooner or later to the workhouse. They would be in and out of the House all their lives. Guardians could see for themselves that lax administration of the law led to an increase of pauperism. They should be more strict, and if lax administration of relief led to pauperism, let them stop such laxity. Why was it not stopped? Because the great landowner was studied, and his wishes were law to many Guardians, and when they met the landowner they took off their hats to him. Such men were not fit to be Guardians. (Hear, hear.)

Mr D. G. HOLLAND (Leicester) said he spoke with diffidence on the subject, although he had been connected with the Leicester Board for some fifteen or sixteen years. He was anxious to thank Mr Tozer for the views he had put before them. He hoped that the effect of the paper would be lasting, and very useful to them in their treatment of the poor. There were one or two points which came before them as Guardians of the poor that had not been alluded to by either of the readers of the papers that morning. The first was, what they could do with the children whom vagrants took about the country with them for the purpose of enlisting sympathy. Without the help of the children he felt that the vagrants would cease to

exist. He believed that the children maintained the tramps, who very often got things given to them when they would not have done except out of pity for the wretched state of the children. The other point was that of early marriages in the large manufacturing towns. The young man and young woman both working in a factory got a combined wage which they considered sufficient for the purpose of commencing housekeeping. Things went on comfortably for a while, until the wife was laid on one side and unable to go to work, and then came the pinch. Over and over again, even for the wife's first illness, they applied to the Guardians for assistance. And then, if the man fell ill, the Union was the only resource. If young people could be induced to make some provision before marriage, a great amount of good would ensue, and one great cause of pauperism might disappear. Speaking of club members and out-relief, his Board had a rule that when an applicant for relief was also a member of a Friendly Society, they only took into account half his club money in considering what relief they should grant him. He would like to ask Mr Tozer whether he had a fund for providing the railway fares of the men whom he sent to other towns in search of work?

Rev. W. TOZER said he had advanced the money from his own pocket.

The CHAIRMAN mentioned that in Lincoln they formerly reckoned the club money as half, but recently the Board discussed the club money question in all its bearings, and decided that when the club money was below five shillings a week they would not take it into account.

Mr ARTHUR ANDREW (Leicester) said the Conference was very much indebted to Mr Day for the pains and trouble he had taken in the preparation of his paper. It was true that it was to a certain extent open to the objection that it was ancient history—(hear, hear)—but there were times when history might be studied with advantage. With regard to Mr Tozer's paper, they were very much obliged to him. It was a proud record to have been president of a labour bureau which had furnished employment for four thousand people. At Leicester the Board of Guardians was neither lavish and extravagant nor harsh and unfeeling. If what had taken place so far at that day's Conference was a fair indication of the feeling of those present, he gravely questioned whether it would meet with the approval of the Leicester people. They had had the usual slating of the tramp, and none, he thought, wanted to say a word in defence of him. But a good many of the remarks would have been more pertinent and more applicable to the case if it were the fact, which he emphatically denied, that Guardians were in the habit, to any large extent, of giving relief to able-bodied people. [The CHAIRMAN: It is illegal.] Exactly. It proved his point. Relief was not given to able-bodied paupers. It was, as the Chairman said, illegal, and they ought to assume that it was not given. A great many strictures were passed upon the evils of giving relief to people who

happened to be out of work. It was illegal, and it was not done, and not likely to be done. It was desirable that Guardians should be quite clear as to whom they had to deal with as paupers. He would like to place before them some figures relating to Leicester. That was a town of something like two hundred thousand people, and they had an army of four thousand paupers. That was a terrible burden, but they must see how it was made up. The bulk of the paupers were in receipt of outdoor relief. He himself held the opinion that if Guardians were to perform their duties in the way that humane and right-minded persons would wish them to do, the bulk of the money they dispensed would go in out-relief, as a little help often enabled a poor person to keep outside the workhouse. Of whom did the four thousand paupers of Leicester consist? There were, at the time the return was compiled, aged and infirm people of sixty years and upwards, numbering no fewer than 1,297; women with families dependent upon them, 1,264—making 2,561 outdoor paupers; and 561 in the House; 260 in the infirmary; 190 children in the Cottage Homes; a daily average of 30 tramps; and 500 lunatics. He hardly needed to add that the great bulk of those people were in their sad position from circumstances over which they had no control. He did not admit that it was necessarily criminal for a man to be a pauper. It was, of course, extremely undesirable, and in some cases perhaps culpable; but the mere fact of pauperism did not in itself constitute a crime. It was not probable either that the enactment of new laws or the more rigid enforcement of those now existing would diminish the numbers of the classes which he had specially mentioned. No amount or kind of regulations could alter the case of people who had grown old; of people afflicted with mental disorders; and of the poor little children left by the premature death of their bread-winner. He felt that he was representing what was at that meeting not the popular side, but all views ought to be brought forward. (Cheers.)

Canon DENTON (Ashby-de-la-Zouch) said he joined with the previous speakers in thanking the author of the last paper for the very valuable hints he had given the meeting that day. Though the subject before them had brought forward many practical suggestions, yet after all they arrived at the conclusion that pauperism was part of their daily life. They had heard of its early history, and they knew from very high authority that the poor were always with them. But assuredly they could lessen the evil, and the fact that the workhouses were not nearly so full now as they were years ago showed that pauperism, at any rate in that direction, was diminishing. How it was with the outdoor relief he was afraid to say. He believed that most of the Unions had found that it had increased, but the population had also increased. Among other evidences of pauperism were vagrants going backwards and forwards to the vagrant ward, but pauperism had a sad and varied aspect and record. Certain causes of pauperism had been put before them very fully in the two papers, and while on the

one hand they had to deal with the worthless and the depraved, on the other they had the aged, the infirm, the needy, and those brought to pauperism and through no fault of their own reduced to the lowest stage of poverty and distress. They would hardly ever diminish the adult pauper population, but they could do a great deal, and they ought to thank the Central Committee of the Poor Law Conference for supporting the Bill on this subject; and he was very pleased to see Mr Chance, who had had something to do with the matter, present at the Conference that day. (Cheers.) If they could make the children into good citizens, let them do all that was possible to this end, and especially by maintaining control over them as long as they legally could. There was another important point: Guardians seemed too much to think that they met at the board-room merely to administer relief and to decide as to the cases before them. Did not they think there was another duty, and that was to try and prevent pauperism? If they devoted time and thought to prevention and repression of pauperism, they would find great opportunities for doing a good work. Could not they also do something to improve the homes of the people, which were answerable for a great deal of pauperism? Then, again, there was want of employment, which had been so fully put before them in the papers. In East Anglia wages were very much lower than in the Midland counties; but an East Anglian Guardian had shown them how the problem of want of employment might be met. They would all be thankful if they could see their way to alleviate distress without pauperising the recipients. Mr Tozer had struck a note which they would reflect upon when they returned to their various districts, and it would doubtless be productive of good results. He repeated that they would always have the poor with them, but let them endeavour to have chiefly the deserving poor. Let them give relief to the worthy with no stinting hand, but repress as far as possible the worthless, and thriftless, and idle, who caused widespread pauperism. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN stated that the Act to which Canon Denton had referred was the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1897. The purport of it was what Guardians had prayed for for many years past. It would enable them to keep not only orphans, but the children of the profligate and those who were otherwise unfit to have the custody of children, until the children had attained the age of eighteen years, or, if the children consented at that age, until they came of age. It meant that the Guardians could retain the control of the children long enough to put them out in the world without the abomination of filthy homes and contact with worthless parents. The Act provided that persons who decoyed or removed children under the control of the Guardians should be liable to a penalty of £20. It would be much better to make imprisonment the alternative punishment of offences against the proposed Act. There was no sense whatever in fining a tramp £20. (Hear, hear.)

Mr CHANCE suggested that Mr Day should answer the question.

Mr DAY expressed the opinion that the penalty of imprisonment was struck out because they were getting more humane, and that the old heavy punishments for infraction of the Poor Law were a thing of the past.

The CHAIRMAN said that in the time of Queen Elizabeth there were unduly severe penalties for such offences, but he thought that imprisonment was still necessary in some cases. (Hear, hear.)

Mr CHANCE (Hon. Sec. of the Central Poor Law Conference) said they were very much indebted to Mr Day for his paper, but they would have been still more indebted to him if he had dealt with the pauperism of the present day, and the causes of it, than if he had taken them back to the fourteenth century. (Hear, hear.) The Poor Law had altered since that period, but there was a lesson to be learned from Mr Day's paper of the evils of too much legislation, for Mr Day spoke of laws that were passed to prevent people giving to beggars and to regulate labour. The present Poor Law had been in operation for many years, and it had greatly reduced pauperism. Mr Day's paper was an attack upon landowners, and without going into it he thought he might say that many landowners could do a great deal more than they were now doing. They turned their land into large farms when wheat was fetching a high price, and now they were regretting that they had in that way extinguished the class of small holders. The time was gone by when a landowner could expect to live on the rent of his land. He must deal with it as commercial men dealt with their commodities. People would then get back to the land. The question that day was how could they prevent pauperism, and he himself and all who heard Mr Tozer's paper must have been very grateful to Mr Tozer for the time and trouble he had expended upon his paper. He was not at all sure but that a Poor Law was the cause of pauperism. At all events they had the Poor Law, and must make the best of it. One of the causes of dissatisfaction with the Poor Law was lax administration. The total abolition of outdoor relief had been often advocated, and no doubt the careless administration of it did great harm. Mr Tozer referred to an exceptionally well-managed Union. He (Mr Chance) thought that he meant the Bradfield Union, but believed, as a matter of fact, that Mr Tozer was speaking of Whitechapel. They need not quarrel about it. Whether Guardians followed Bradfield, Whitechapel, or Ipswich they would produce very much the same result. There was a Union near Bradfield, Wallingford, where they gave out-relief, but only after the most exhaustive inquiries, and the results were almost identical with those of Bradfield. At Whitechapel there was such a careful administration of out-relief that it almost amounted to the abolition of it. There were no complaints, because it had been going on for a quarter of a century. If they acted on those principles of never giving relief except after careful inquiry they would find that pauperism would diminish to a very marked extent. Mr Stevens' report showed that at Nottingham they were pursuing

those principles with the most remarkable results. With regard to club money, it was apparently the recognised thing for Boards of Guardians to differentiate between the deserving and the undeserving, and that was rather dangerous. What they wanted was to insist that members' payments to Friendly Societies should be sufficient from an actuarial point of view to provide the illness allowance. [A Member—They could not pay it.] The granting of out-relief encouraged Friendly Society members to look to the rates to supplement their allowances. He could not go into the drink problem. It was a political question. He thought they were gradually reducing the number of paupers, and he regarded it as very remarkable and full of encouragement that the number of paupers was now only 26 per 1,000 against 62 per 1,000 in 1849. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. E. HACKING (Bakewell) said it was very difficult to persuade his Board to send delegates to that Conference. If the Conferences were to be of value they must deal with absolutely practical questions. (Hear, hear.) They ought not to be taken back for even half an hour to the reign of Queen Elizabeth. (Hear, hear.) That being his opinion, he hoped that in future the Committee of the august gathering—(a laugh)—in choosing the subject of papers would choose those which dealt with things as they were in the present day and not as they were hundreds of years ago. (Hear, hear.) He must add his own experience to the words which were spoken in reference to the housing of the labouring classes: their miserable dwellings were a cause of pauperism. It was possible for many of them as members of District Councils to labour energetically to improve the condition of the poor in this respect. One of the chief causes of pauperism had been practically tabooed by the Conference. He meant drink, which was at the root of an immense amount of evil. Why were so many people intemperate in these days? Because so few antidotes were provided. They needed to provide places where working men might spend their evenings, and find relaxation and change without recourse to intoxicants. (Hear, hear.) Another cause of pauperism was lunacy. That represented a class of pauperism which would be with them to the end of the chapter. The different ways in which relief was administered had been mentioned, and it seemed that there was a leaning towards humanity in one Union and towards severity in another, where there was a desire to save the rates, and that the Guardians were really in the end dependent upon the relieving officers for guidance. The relieving officers should be men of character and capacity, who would not be the catspaws of any particular class, but would judge for themselves the position of those with whom they had to deal. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. C. E. DANBY (Market Harborough) said his experience had been gained solely in agricultural districts. He desired to say a word. He would ask them whether they did not think that they needed to exercise patience in connection with the agri-

cultural population. There was no class whose condition had changed more during the last thirty or forty years than the agricultural labourer. Consider what the labourer's wages formerly were, and how they had increased fifty per cent., while simultaneously the price of necessities had declined almost correspondingly. The labourer's condition had most materially changed. If they looked back some forty or fifty years, he thought they would find that there was then no class so prolific of pauperism. At that time the labourer could not make provision for sickness and old age if he had a family to bring up, and it was considered that he was entitled to assistance from the rates. Under the old conditions the labourer was worked as long as possible, and in his old age he received relief as being only due to him from those who had reaped the benefit of his services. But things were changing now, and he thought that if they had patience with the older people who had grown up in that idea, he did not think they would find that the young men would eventually come to them for relief in the same way. The younger generation had a spirit of independence which, if directed aright, would be all the better for this country. (Hear, hear.) There was one means by which pauperism might be overcome, and that was State-aided pensions. Mr Burdett's articles in the *Times* last year were worthy of a great deal more attention than they appeared to have secured. It was shown that with a small amount of State aid the working-man might provide himself with an old-age pension. Speaking of girls, he thought there was no class in the present day so well provided for as girls in domestic service. Their wages were large, their responsibilities small. Such girls were earning enough to make excellent provision for old age, and the public should try as far as possible to encourage thrift among girls of that class. Their savings should be sunk so that they could not touch them until the attainment of their sixtieth year, when the money would be wanted by them.

Mr EDWARD HINE (Chesterfield) said there was a reason why he should address the meeting. Friendly Society work had been very prominently brought forward by Mr Chance, and he (Mr Hine) could speak about that work with knowledge, being at the present time the Chairman of the Investigation Committee of the Manchester Unity, Chief Ranger of a Court of Foresters, and a prominent Buffalo. Mr Chance said that Friendly Societies ought to be compelled to pay their members enough to keep them off the rates, and that Friendly Society men ought not to be helped. One of the principal witnesses before the Royal Commission now inquiring into that subject, said that when an agricultural labourer had paid his contribution to the club he had not got enough left to have a drink with. That showed that the labouring classes were doing a great deal more in the way of self-denial than those who came to that Conference and lectured them, while perhaps suffering from gout and other complaints through living on the fat of the land. (Laughter and applause.) He did not see why working-men should be degraded.

They had paid poor rates, and as a community they declared that none should starve. If he remembered rightly, one out of every three inmates of the workhouses stated that he had at some time or other belonged to Friendly Societies. Some people said, "Don't believe those people in the workhouse; they're paupers, and they would say anything." He did not think all those men were liars, although they were poor. Possibly some of those men had belonged to Colliery Field Clubs, which were not registered under the Friendly Societies Act. Such Field Clubs should be stopped, because it often happened that after a man had belonged to one of them for many years he was told to go, and then he could not get his money back, and he forfeited all benefits, and yet that money had been deducted from his wages in order that somebody should be protected against having to support him if he fell ill. Miners' wages would be very good if they worked five or six days a week all the year round, but house-coal miners got only one or two days a week in the summer, and when they worked all the week in the winter months there were the debts contracted during the slack time to pay off. Professor Marshall said that thrift on twenty shillings a week—not the agricultural labourer's eleven shillings—was the wise expenditure of every penny on the proper maintenance of the home. Yet the labourer was urged to put money away for future needs. Widows had been left out in the cold that day. He did not see how a widow between twenty and thirty years of age could support herself and children. It was their duty to help the widows and fatherless as Guardians and as Christians. (Hear, hear.) That Conference should announce that they were determined to sweep away pauperism, and to stand before the world as Christians. Let them wipe away a great blot from the escutcheon of this mighty empire.

Mr CHANCE said he meant to convey that Friendly Society contributions should be sufficient to provide the promised benefits in time of need. It would be a dangerous thing to begin supplementing club money out of the rates.

Mr JOHN SMEDLEY (Belper) said that if he was asked to read a paper at such a Conference he would bring a paper that could be read in something less than three times the allotted period. (Hear, hear.) He took it that every human being born in this country had a right to live. [A Voice—Why? (Laughter.)] He himself was one of a family of eight, and his father got eighteen shillings a week. [A Voice—What right has a man with eighteen shillings a week to have eight children?] He (the speaker) did not know. He never asked his father the question. (Oh! and laughter.) He was not a young man, but he believed he would live to see the Poor Law swept away and pointed out as a barbarous system. They talked about making provision for old age. How was it possible to make provision for old age? He himself had been working since he was seven years old. There were tens of thousands of people who worked from the time they were ten until they were seventy. They raised a family

in an honourable manner, and clothed and fed them, and yet what was there staring them in the face except the workhouse? The sooner that system was swept away the better, for he was in favour of treating the poor as a Christian country ought to treat them. He held that it was the duty of the Government to make it possible for people to live, to be well fed, clothed, and educated; and when they had worked as long as they could, the Government ought to enable the people to live in ease and comfort for the rest of their life. The Conference had faced the question that day in a namby-pamby way, and unless members went to such gatherings in a practical way, they would simply go back to their Boards saying that Mr So-and-so said this and Mr So-and-so said that. They wanted to do something that would lead to reasonable treatment of the poor.

Mr JOHN LEES (Nottingham) said that when he entered the hall he thought he had strolled by mistake into an adjourned sitting of the Church Congress, so completely was the clerical element in the ascendant. (Cheers and laughter.) Coming from a large Union where they spent £300 a week, and had five Relief Committees, he said unhesitatingly that in his opinion one way to stop pauperism would be to remove all the parsons from Boards of Guardians. (Hear, hear, and dissent.) If Mr Chance was going to touch the Friendly Societies he would have enough to do. (Hear, hear.) That Conference had nothing to do with Friendly Societies. (Hear, hear.) Sometimes a man came before a Relief Committee and said, "I have paid rates for forty years," and that had nothing whatever to do with relief. He himself had paid rates a good many years, but he was not expecting relief. (Laughter.) Many of the Guardians were only seen now and then at the Board meetings—only when they were to act as special pleaders for applicants for outdoor relief. Mr Chance said people ought to make provision for sickness. They had done remarkably well in that way. His own Relief Committee did not grant relief to persons in receipt of full sick pay, but if applicants were receiving reduced sick pay the Local Government Board gave Guardians the option whether they would consider it or not, and if an applicant was in a bad state of health and had a wife and children dependent upon him, his (Mr Lees') Relief Committee never took the club money into account. The question of want of employment was a large one. The tramps were a dangerous class and required to be dealt with. He was in favour of the stone-breaking test. They had formerly in his Union a large-hearted chairman, who opened labour yards, an experiment which cost the town thousands of pounds, and turned out a failure. They must judge each case on its merits, and who ought to know what they were better than the relieving officer?

The CHAIRMAN—If the speakers cannot keep to the subject better than they do, they are not very fit to manage much at home.

Mr H. STEVENS (Local Government Board Inspector) said that the discussion seemed to have digressed to a certain extent to the

prevention of pauperism. He wished to thank Mr Tozer for his most admirable paper. Mr Tozer began by treating of the unemployed as those willing to work and those unwilling to work, and with regard to the former he made most valuable suggestions as to the formation of a labour bureau, and he (Mr Stevens) did not propose to say a word more on the subject of those willing to work. With regard to those unwilling to work, they seemed to him to divide themselves naturally into two classes—casual paupers and habitual paupers. Mr Tozer went further than he would be inclined to go in regarding the whole of those who came to the casual ward for relief as unworthy and unwilling to work. A very large percentage of them were persons who were unwilling to work, but there were always some who wanted work of a casual description. The latter were usually found in the vicinity of works of railway and dock construction, and they bore no resemblance to the regular casual. (Hear, hear.) At the same time, of course, the casual paupers included many of the worst characters to be found anywhere out of prison. It was in consequence of that admixture, partly, that the systems advocated by the Local Government Board seemed to him to be so good, and to recommend themselves so thoroughly. Wherever the Casual Paupers Orders had been carried out the number of vagrants had invariably decreased. Tramps ought to be detained for two nights, and do a good day's work in return for their relief; and on the second morning of their stay they should, if they had finished their work, be allowed to go so early as to give them a chance of getting work. That system hit the habitual pauper very hard, while at the same time it assisted the man who was *bona fide* in search of work. He wished also that during the intervening day the cellular system should be adopted, and that the individual task should be exacted from everybody. When they considered the admixture of classes that formed the casual ranks, they would see the wisdom of this course. Within the last twelvemonths a great misfortune happened in that district by the stoppage of a large cotton mill. About five thousand people were thrown out of employment. It was utterly impossible to offer the workhouse to anything like all the applicants for relief. The Guardians adopted the labour test, and out-relief was given with the sanction of the Local Government Board. He was told that the prospect of reopening the mill was very doubtful. Such circumstances as that might tend at times to throw amongst the casual poor, people who by no means belonged to the tramp class. With reference to regular pauperism, he would like to distinguish between poverty and pauperism. Thriftlessness, intemperance, and early marriages were amongst the causes of poverty, and indirectly of pauperism. But the extent of the latter was largely a matter of administration, for though there might be poverty, there need not be so much pauperism. He was very much averse to the view that the rates should take the place of private charity. It must be remembered that the widow in receipt of out-relief was quite as much a pauper

as the widow who became an inmate of the workhouse. Boards of Guardians in giving relief could not help pauperising people. It was not only the administration by Boards of Guardians that caused pauperism. There was nowadays a tendency in every rank of life to imitate the manners and dress of their social superiors. If the well-to-do were more careful to set a good example, he believed there would be less pauperism. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. ISAAC RAINE (Blaby) said he emphatically dissented from the opinion that the clerical element was undesirable in Boards of Guardians; and he would only add that that was not the subject under discussion. (Hear, hear.) The tendency of the Conference seemed to him to be, if not against the poor, at any rate in favour of always giving orders for the House. They had at Blaby only thirty-four inmates—men, women, and children—all told, but they had seven hundred outside. (Oh.) If he could keep a man or woman outside the workhouse he would never compel them to enter it. Take them in, and they cost about 5s. 6d. per head per week. Give them out-relief, they cost only half-a-crown a week each. (Mr TOZER—That won't do.) One cause of pauperism had not been mentioned at the Conference—it was the supersession of labour by machinery. Six out of every ten of the outdoor poor of Blaby were framework knitters who had been ousted by machinery. They were stranded. They knew nothing else. His own groom, a former framework knitter, hardly knew the difference between the horse's head and tail. (Laughter.) He was very glad to have heard Mr Tozer's paper, and he might mention that he was the first Guardian who had ever been sent from the Blaby Board to attend that Conference—with expenses paid. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) He should go back and tell the Board that he had heard one of the best papers ever read on the causes of pauperism; and further, that the discussion had turned, naturally, to the remedies. (Hear, hear.) His Board were very careful in granting relief, and put people on the list only for a short time, subject to periodical revision, so that, on the least change of circumstances, the relief could be stopped. He did not agree with forcing an old man, who had lived all his life in a village, to go into the workhouse and end his days there, and be buried in a pauper's grave. They must regulate administration according to local circumstances.

Hon. FREDERICK STRUTT (Hon. Secretary of the Conference) said that he had not intended to speak, as he was not now a Guardian; but one question had been but very lightly touched upon that day, namely, lunacy. He happened to be a County Councillor and a member of the Asylums Committee. That Committee was now considering the advisability of enlarging their Asylum, although but a few years ago an enormous sum was spent upon it. In the Committee's debate on the question, one gentleman asserted that there would be persons there who ought not to be supported out of the rates. So he (Mr Strutt) inquired of the Clerk

to the Belper Union; and he learned that in the year 1889 there were in that Union seventy-three lunatics, of whom five were entirely supported by their friends. Last year there were one hundred and sixteen, of whom only two were wholly maintained by their relatives. That meant that in a large mixed Union, in which there were mines, quarries, agricultural land, and factories, the number of lunatics had increased 50 or 60 per cent. in a few years. That alone indicated a very considerable factor in the increase of pauperism. At the same time it was a great blessing to the community that the insane should be as well treated as they possibly could be. (Cheers.)

Mr JOHN A. COLE (Sleaford) said he did not propose to take up much of their time, as the ground had been already so well covered by the gentlemen who had preceded him. At the same time he thought that Unions like Sleaford did not receive the attention that was due to them. As Poor Law Guardians, they had two very difficult duties to perform: to study the interest of the ratepayers on the one hand, and of the poor on the other. A great many people who came from the towns did not know under what distress the rural districts were labouring. Guardians in those districts had to close their hands and refuse to allow any feelings of generosity to carry them away. One of the causes of pauperism was that the young men migrated to the towns, leaving their parents behind them to come on the rates. The Sleaford Board of Guardians went very carefully into the question, and they came to the conclusion that the only way to prevent people becoming chargeable to the rates was to give them facilities for putting away a portion of their earnings, in order that it might be increased by the State, and form an old-age pension which a man could claim as a matter of right. Balancing the two interests, of the ratepayers and the people who were kept by the rates, it appeared to him that there was also this point to be considered. It was no doubt extremely hard that people who had lived all their lives respectably should be compelled to go into the workhouse. It was always a wrench to them, but he had known of cases where, when the house was offered, the children had come forward and prevented their parents from becoming paupers. A great deal depended on the discriminating powers of the relieving officer. Where friends or relatives were in a position to contribute towards the support of an applicant for relief, let the Guardians offer the House.

Mr ARTHUR H. BONSER (Mansfield) said that he was very much struck with the admirable suggestions made in Mr Tozer's excellent paper. He had been Chairman of a Relief Committee for many years, and he had been impressed with the fact that the majority of the people who came before them had never made any provision for sickness or old age. Although young people got more money now than they ever got in former times, their working period was shortened, the day of their prosperity was over when they got into years, because they were cast aside like an old machine. He was a member of the Board of Directors of one of the largest Friendly

Societies, the Druids, and the official view was that every man could provide against sickness and loss of employment between the ages of twenty and forty. He saw no difference between giving indoor relief and outdoor relief, from the ratepayer's point of view. If they gave very lavish indoor relief, it meant an enormous expense for buildings and officials, and so forth. There was a tendency to sneer at the clergy on Boards of Guardians, but he saw no reason why a Guardian, whether a clergyman or not, should not investigate applications from his own district. With regard to the children, he did not think there were more than three or four Unions which had dealt with the question in a proper way. The Sheffield system was the best system he had ever seen.

The CHAIRMAN said that one great advantage of a Conference was that they got people letting off their own opinions whether others liked it or not, and so long as the discussion was conducted in a friendly and gentlemanly way, it was bound to have good results. Unless people expressed their opinions, they had better stop at home. In every workhouse in the country there was more or less maladministration; for they had every class, from the dear old lady who had lost all her friends down to the latest gaol bird. There were no less than twenty-three classifications, and no master and matron could combine the various qualities requisite for such a post. The inevitable result was that they were either too kind or too harsh, and, thanks to a false philanthropy with which the world stinks, it generally inclined towards kindness. The consequence was they got a number of able-bodied men who did not get enough work to make the workhouse distasteful to them, and they stopped—a curse to every one about the establishment. It encouraged the loafer to come in and stop there, when if he had proper work he would quit. Another cause of pauperism was early marriages, but he for one did not want to discourage early marriages, as they all knew what the alternative was. The young couple fell ill, and obtained medical relief, and medical relief was always the first step towards pauperisation. With regard to one speaker's remark about domestic service. His own impression was that the lower class of servant was the worst paid girl in the whole range of white labour. Did they expect a bright-eyed, smiling little girl to put by anything against the time when she would be sixty. That little servant never thought about living to be sixty years of age, or that she would ever resemble that old woman who chars. He thoroughly approved of Friendly Societies, and asked what would have happened without them. As to excluding the clergy from Poor Law work, the poor people would be the first to deplore such a step. On the question of lunacy, every medical man liked to have a good record of cures, and if a person was in and out of an asylum ten times as cured each re-admission figured in the statistics as a fresh case of lunacy. So that perhaps the increase of insanity was exaggerated. As to what could be done with small wages, his old carpenter brought up a

family of twenty-seven children and was thrice married on a weekly wage of thirteen shillings and sixpence. He need not say anything more. (Laughter.)

Mr DAY, replying on the discussion, said his point was this, that the present Poor Law was instituted by men who believed only in indoor relief. His contention was that if they could get the labourer back to the land, there would be fewer applicants for relief; compel every man to maintain himself; and do away with rates, which were a tax upon the community in favour of the employer and the landlord. The present Poor Law was not in favour of the labourer at all, but a curse to him.

Rev. W. TOZER, replying, referred to early marriages, saying it would be impossible to lay down a rule as to the age at which people ought to marry. Pauperism did not arise from early marriages, but from the marriages of those who were neither physically nor mentally fit to propagate their species. The time had come when Guardians should demand legislation in regard to the marriage of people of that kind.

Rev. Canon DENTON asked the meeting to return a vote of thanks to the Chairman for the very able and pleasant manner in which he had conducted the Conference. All present would go back to their various districts the better for what had taken place at their meeting together in the good city of Lincoln. (Cheers.)

Rev. W. TOZER seconded, saying the Chairman was a man of great experience and sympathy. They sometimes got a man who was beautifully carved but cold. The Chairman had a heart as well as a head. (Hear, hear.)

The vote of thanks having been carried with acclamation,

The CHAIRMAN said he was exceedingly obliged to them for the kindly way in which they had received the vote of thanks.

The proceedings then terminated.

Eastern District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE FOR THE COUNTIES
OF ESSEX, SUFFOLK, AND NORFOLK, HELD AT COL-
CHESTER ON THURSDAY, 11TH NOVEMBER 1897.

SIR WILLIAM BRAMPTON GURDON, K.C.M.G., C.B.,
PRESIDING.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference :—

* Guardians specially designated by their Boards.

ESSEX (sixteen Unions).

COLCHESTER—

- *Butcher, Wm. (Vice-Chairman).
- *Blyth, J. G.
- Flary, Mrs A.
- Sewell, Mrs S.
- Surridge, Miss.
- *Wicks, J. (Chairman).
- *White, C. E. (Clerk).

LEXDEN AND WINSTREE—

- *Ashwin, H.
- *Cook, A.
- *Folkard, F.
- *Hutley, C. (Vice-Chairman).
- Slayte, T. (Deputy Clerk).

TENDRING—

- *Fenn, A. E.
- *Fitch, J. A.
- *Thomson, F. W.

NORFOLK (twenty-two Unions).

DEPWADE—

- Holmes, J. S.

GREAT YARMOUTH—

- *Cooper, Mrs.

MITFORD AND LAUNDITCH—

- *Hudson, J. P.

SUFFOLK (seventeen Unions).

BLYTHING—

- Moore, Eaton W.

BOSMERE AND CLAYDON—

- *Downing, Lieut.-Col. C. M.

BURY ST EDMUNDS—

- *Bugg, G. T.
- *Kelly, Pearson.
- *Hanchet, A. H.
- *Taylor, C.
- *Paine, A. J.

IPSWICH—

- *Anness, S. R. (Chairman).
- *Cobbold, Mrs J. P.
- *Vulliamy, A. F. (Clerk).

MUTFORD AND LOTHINGLAND—

- *Bee, T.
- *Mobbs, W.

SAMFORD—

- *Furnis, T. S.
- *Brewster, Rev. J. G.
- *Keeble, W. F. (Vice-Chairman).

Unions not represented :—

ESSEX—Billericay, Braintree, Chelmsford, Dunmow, Epping, Halstead, Maldon, Ongar, Orsett, Rochford, Romford, Saffron Walden, West Ham.

NORFOLK—Aylsham, Blofield, Docking, Downham, Erpingham, St Faith's, Flegg, Forshoe, Freebridge, Guiltcross, Henstead, King's Lynn, Loddon and Clavering, Norwich, Smallburgh, Swaffham, Thetford, Walsingham, Wayland.

SUFFOLK—Cosford, Hartismere, Hoxne, Mildenhall, Plomesgate, Risbridge, Stow, Sudbury, Thingoe, Wangford, Woodbridge.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

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 2. POWERS OF DETENTION IN WORKHOUSES, BY Mr A. F.
VULLIAMY, *Clerk to the Ipswich Board of Guardians* - 458
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THURSDAY, 11TH NOVEMBER.

The CHAIRMAN, who was cordially greeted, thanked the Conference for the honour done him in asking him to preside on the occasion of the first meeting of the Eastern District Poor Law Conference in Essex. The first meeting of the Conference was held in Norwich two years ago ; last year they met in Ipswich ; and now they had come to the third county, Essex. They were grateful to the Mayor of Colchester and the Corporation for giving them the use of the hall, and for the welcome they had accorded to the Conference. They had before them two very interesting papers—one by Mr Sancroft Holmes on Local Taxation ; and the other by their Hon. Secretary, Mr A. F. Vulliamy, on “Powers of Detention in Workhouses.”

The following paper was then read :—

LOCAL TAXATION.

BY MR SANCROFT HOLMES, J.P., D.L.,

Gawdy Hall, Norfolk.

IN accepting the invitation given me to read a paper on Local Taxation, I have I fear undertaken a task for which I have but very slight qualifications. The subject is admittedly an extremely technical and difficult one, requiring expert knowledge which I do not pretend to possess. It is, however, of such

moment at the present time to all who are concerned in the ownership or occupation of the land, that I felt it might be of some slight use if I attempted to state the case of the agricultural interest, so far as I am acquainted with it, if only it resulted in bringing the matter before this meeting, and if haply it helped to put the subject more prominently in the mind of the public.

The appointment by the present Government of a Commission to inquire into local taxation offers us an opportunity of stating our case in a way which we have never had before, and it becomes most important and opportune that the subject should be ventilated on every occasion possible.

The terms of reference to the Commission are—
“To inquire into the present system by which taxation is raised for local purposes, and to report whether, and how far, all kinds of real and personal property contribute *equitably* to such taxation, and if not, what alterations in the law are desirable in order to secure that result.”

In dealing with local taxation, I make no apology for referring to Imperial taxation. The two are intimately and indissolubly connected, it being one of the chief complaints of owners of real property that they are mulcted in rates to pay what are in reality National charges. I shall only attempt to touch on two points—the undue share which real property pays as compared with personal ; the anomalies of the existing system of assessing real property.

No better statement of the case with regard to the claims of real property for relief can be found than that contained in the representation to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, March 1895, made by that most useful and much to be encouraged body, “The Local Taxation Committee.” It is there stated :—

“The claim for further relief from the burden of local taxation is grounded solely on the principle of equality of taxation as between different classes of pro-

perty, which was the avowed object of the Finance Act, 1894 (Death Duties Bill, Sir W. Harcourt)." The two main propositions which that committee desire to establish are : That real property pays an undue share of local taxation as compared with personal property ; that agricultural land pays an undue share of local taxation as compared with other real property.

"In 1891-92, the poor, pauper lunatics, police, highways, education, &c., in England and Wales, cost £25,000,000 ; of this, 8 millions were provided by Imperial funds, real property contributing its quota in the shape of income-tax, the remaining 17 millions being raised by rates on real property alone. This burden, if equitably and evenly divided between real and personal property, would be as 2 to 5, or 5 millions instead of 17 from real property, 12 from personal. The income-tax returns for 1893 show a total gross value of all property in the United Kingdom amounting to £712,000,000, of which 202 millions is in respect of real property, 57 on land, and 145 on houses, and 510 in respect of other property." Local rates being raised solely on real property, it comes about that 28 per cent. of the total property assessed pays 68 per cent. of the total amount expended. Real property has the further special distinction of paying land tax, once imposed on all property, and Inhabited house duty, which exclusive of land tax redeemed, nearly £900,000, amounts to another £2,500,000.*

* By the Agricultural Rates Act of 1896, real property in the form of agricultural land has received further assistance as follows :—

County Councils	-	-	-	-	£328,803	4	4
Receiver of Metropolitan Police District					4,389	14	8
Boards of Guardians	-	-	-	-	504,933	11	4
Rural District Councils	-	-	-	-	327,186	12	8
Boroughs	-	-	-	-	18,218	6	0
Other Urban Districts	-	-	-	-	5,397	2	8
School Boards	-	-	-	-	107,253	17	6
Highway Boards and Surveyors	-	-	-	-	34,851	9	10

£1,331,033 19 0

The representation further states :—

“ The truth is that the whole system of rating is wrong. Rates, such as those for the poor, lunatics, roads, and education, are levied on real property alone, whereas they benefit the whole community, and should either be directly paid by the nation, or if it be thought advisable to continue local administration, and to maintain the method of a local rate, this rate should be levied as originally proposed under the Act of Elizabeth, on all inhabitants according to their ability.”

A large proportion of what is now classed as Local is in fact National expenditure ; it is expenditure the benefits of which are not confined to the locality rated, it is expenditure directed and controlled more by the Imperial than by the local authority. Poor Law administration is directed and enforced by rules and regulations laid down by the Local Government Board. The police are paid and pensioned by the county authority, but subject to the approval of the same Board. Pauper lunatic asylums are in like manner managed by the county authority, but the expenditure is directly controlled by the orders of the Lunacy Commissioners. Education in the parish elementary schools is carried out in accordance with the rules and mandates of the Education Department. All these various items of local expenditure were in bygone days, in reality as well as name, local, the method and manner of administration, and the raising the requisite sum in rates, being left in the hands of the various local authorities. Now the Imperial authority having undertaken a share of the burden, demands and obtains uniformity of administration, little regard being paid to the varying circumstances of different localities. Poor agricultural districts, such as there are in East Anglia, are required to maintain an expenditure which may be only adequate and suitable where population and wealth make the district prosperous, but which is

in excess of the requirements and beyond the means of our poor corn-growing lands.

Agriculture as an industry is not in a position to derive the same benefits as many others from the expenditure of local rates, and the burden is disproportionately great to the return which it makes. Almost the whole of our agricultural produce has to meet the competition of the world. Corn grown with the least skilled and cheapest labour, in countries where the soil is naturally fertile, and unexhausted by centuries of cropping, where there is little, if any direct taxation to pay, and where the Central Government costs but a trifling amount as compared with Great Britain, comes into this country, assisted by cheap water carriage, and subsidised by the heavy premium on exchange, and undersells our home-grown produce, weighted down as it is by charges and burdens imposed at a time when the Corn Laws were in force, and when the difficulties of transport constituted a real and effective measure of protection.

As a matter of national insurance, it must be politic that the land should be encouraged to produce its maximum yield, if only that there should be a substantial reserve of corn in the event of our command of the seas being even temporarily threatened. The slightest scare of war will now advance the price of corn by leaps and bounds, and it would be wiser economy to keep the money at home than to pay the foreigner panic prices. The abandonment of corn-growing not only makes its cultivation at a future time more difficult, but it unfortunately means a rapid diminution of the agricultural population, and a consequent decrease in the supply of our best recruits for both Army and Navy. The rural population is dwindling away—in some parishes to an alarming extent. The prospect that agriculture offers being small in comparison with that of other industries, our young and active men migrate into the towns, and once accustomed to the

higher wages and its more attractive life, there is no chance of their electing to become agricultural labourers again. The question is constantly being asked, "Where are the agricultural labourers of the future to come from?"

As an investment, land should of all things be the one which should be made attractive and secure. Every inducement should be held out to people to embark their capital, and develop its resources. Our yeomen used to be the backbone of the country, but they are almost all gone, and none but wealthy men, having incomes derived from other sources, can now afford to hold property, which pays them little or nothing in the shape of interest.

The cry is often raised of "the land for the people," but under the existing system of taxation the free gift of the land to the labourers would in many cases mean for them, "not bread, but a stone." Relief from the existing burden of rates and taxes would not bring back prosperity to agriculture, but it would go a long way to promote it; and £10,000,000 saved to real property, would quickly find its way into our home markets, and help to maintain and develop our home industries.

The contention that agricultural land pays an undue share of local taxation as compared with the real property is admirably set forth in an article on "Local Taxation in Rural Districts," by Mr R. Henry Rew, *Royal Agricultural Society Journal*, December 1896; and I would commend this article to the attention of every one who desires to make himself acquainted with the real facts of the case, which are most lucidly and ably discussed. It is there stated, page 654:—

A yeoman farmer occupying 300 acres is assessed at say £300 under the Agricultural Rates Act. The house and buildings are assessed at say £50, the land at £250. The rate in the pound may be put at 2s. 3d., which is the average "rural rate," according to Sir Henry Fowler. He would pay in rates £19. 13s. 9d.

A tradesman occupying premises at £50 rateable value, the rate in the pound being 4s.—the average urban rate, according to Sir Henry

Fowler—would pay in rates £10. It is assumed, so as to be on the safe side, that the tradesman pays nearly double the rate in the pound that the farmer does, though as a matter of fact it may very well happen that he pays the same, or even in some cases less. But when this has been allowed, it will be seen that under the new Act, by which the land pays only half the rates, the farmer still pays twice the amount that his fellow ratepayer in the town has to pay.

It must be evident that the occupier of land and the occupier of a house are not rated according to their respective "ability." Nor are they rated according to the benefit which they receive from the expenditure towards which they contribute. The urban ratepayer usually pays, no doubt, a higher rate in the pound, though a smaller aggregate amount, than the rural ratepayer, but he obtains in return all the "resources of civilisation" which the former has to forego.

The principle has long been admitted and acted on, that real property should be relieved from some of its burden of rates and taxes, and that the general wealth of the country should contribute its fair share of the expenditure which benefits the whole nation. Expenditure which benefits only the immediate locality should of necessity be charged upon the locality, but expenditure which benefits the country at large, and which is enforced and controlled by the Imperial authority, should equally of necessity be met by the general revenues of the country. Land as such has long since ceased to enjoy any special privilege, and steam has revolutionised agriculture as an industry; if it is to prosper, it must be made free, and treated in the same way by the State as all our other industries are.

THE ANOMALIES OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM OF ASSESSING REAL PROPERTY.

No one who is conversant with the system under which land and houses are now assessed but agrees, that a sweeping reform should be made. The Norfolk County Council and the Norfolk Chamber of Agriculture have within the last few months unanimously adopted the following resolution:—

"That the present system, by which one and the same property is or may be assessed for tax and

rating purposes by four different authorities, viz., for property tax, county rate, union (including poor, sanitary, district, school board, &c.), and for land tax, is an anomaly. This Council desires, therefore, to urge upon the President of the Local Government Board the pressing necessity for the immediate passing of a Bill which will have the effect of simplifying matters, by enacting that there shall be one assessment for all tax and rating purposes, such an assessment to be made on one basis common to the whole of England."

Whatever may be urged on behalf of maintaining existing rates and taxes, nothing can be said in favour of maintaining a system of assessment so complicated, so illogical, and so vexatious as the present. If one assessment for all purposes, local and Imperial, is desirable, and I cannot imagine that such a proposition can be controverted, it is essential that it should be uniform throughout England; in my opinion this can only be effected in one way, by doing away with the existing assessing authorities. Personally I am in favour of a system by which Assessors appointed by the Government should annually make up the county valuation lists, the various local authorities advising the Assessor as to the facts.

In Scotland Assessors appointed by the County Councils, who are also in certain cases Government officers, make up annually the valuation rolls, upon which both Government and local rates and taxes are collected; the valuation rolls being revised and reprinted every year. If a similar system were introduced for England, and opportunities afforded for half-yearly revision, with an appeal to some easily accessible and inexpensive judicial tribunal, I believe it would afford great satisfaction to the general body of ratepayers, and it would relieve the existing rating authorities from work which is most uncongenial. I should like to see all matters relating to railways, water, gas, &c. &c.,

determined by some one central authority for the whole of England.

One assessment for all purposes having been obtained, I hope we may also succeed in securing, what in my opinion is nearly as essential, a register in every parish, union, county, or other rating area, which will enable the ratepayer, promptly and without expense, to ascertain what is the sum total of the rates and taxes in each separate area. Government returns of the various items of local expenditure are, I know, to be procured, but owing to their immense volume, and the delay which takes place in publishing them, the returns for 1893-94 being the latest complete set now available, it is impossible for the ordinary ratepayer to ascertain what the total burden in any particular parish in which he is interested, may be. The amount of rates and taxes levied over large areas is an important figure, but it does not indicate the excessive burden imposed upon individual parishes. In the interest of the State as well as of the individual, it should be impossible for the cultivation of the land to be made prohibitory, solely on account of the burden of rates and taxes. Figures dealing with each individual parish would, if available, prove to the most unwilling and hostile opponent of local taxation reform, that there are many places where agriculture is now being crushed out of existence, by rates and taxes.

In a return made by the Norfolk Chamber of Agriculture this year, it is stated that "the average rates in eighteen Norfolk parishes, taken at random over the whole county, were, in 1895, $35\frac{1}{2}$ d., as against $23\frac{3}{4}$ d. in 1875, an increase of no less than $11\frac{3}{4}$ d. or 50 per cent. in the last twenty years"; but there is no public return by which the accuracy of these figures can be proved, and those supplied from private sources are always subjected to the criticism, that they are inaccurate, if not intentionally exaggerated. What is wanted is an official register of every sum levied by

rates and taxes in each individual parish. If such were now available, I believe the present system of local taxation would be at once condemned.

As owners and occupiers of real property, and particularly of agricultural land, we ask for and desire no more than simple justice. We have borne for many years almost the whole burden of charges which are Imperial as well as local in their character, and though relief in the way of grants in aid have been liberally given in recent years, they have not benefited us to the extent intended, in consequence of the sure and steady increase in the total sum expended by the local authorities. We now ask that in the altered condition of agriculture, and in the altered condition of Great Britain's wealth, agricultural land being no longer in any sense privileged or protected, Parliament will, in its wisdom, see fit to recognise our necessity, and pass such measures as may be necessary to secure that all kinds of property, real and personal, shall in future contribute equitably, to local as well as Imperial taxation.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN said he might express, on behalf of the meeting, their very sincere thanks for the able paper which they had just listened to. There was a little too much of the pessimist, for, he thought, the author did not take a sufficiently hopeful view of the future of agriculture. It was extremely important that the Local Authorities should retain the control of rating as much as possible in their own hands. It was necessary that taxation and representation should go together, and that the Local Authorities should be responsible for the expenditure. That of course could be done, and yet they might have a very small proportion of the local expenditure and local funds, as in the case of the School Board. The Imperial contribution had increased more and more, until the rates in some parishes had got to be very small in respect to those; but there was still every incentive to the local body to be economical, because whatever they spent in excess of a certain amount had to be provided out of the local exchequer. The Local Government Board interfered with them rather too much in matters of Poor Law, especially as the Government Departments could not, by their statutory powers, give Local Authorities so much latitude as those bodies were entitled

to. For instance, in the matter of pensions to Poor Law officials, it was often an advantage to pension off a bad official, but on the other hand it was frequently better to pay a high salary than to grant a pension. There was one case where a man who was now a Poor Law official was trying, with some prospect of success, for a County Council lectureship, and it seemed a most unfair thing that the Guardians should be bound to grant that man a pension, although he might be in future in receipt of a larger income from the rates than he had ever previously enjoyed. The prospects of wheat-growing were very hopeful, especially since last year. No doubt machinery might be much more widely used than it is. If he was not afraid of throwing men out of work he could make use of a great deal more. He felt they would all approve very highly of the resolution passed by the Norfolk Chamber of Agriculture. He also agreed with Mr Holmes as to the utility of a register in each parish. It was very difficult to get information on these subjects. The Local Government Act of three years ago did not go far enough. They wanted to have fewer bodies, and he would be glad if they could do with only the County, District, and Parish Councils. He would do away with all Burial Boards, School Boards, and other similar authorities. Still, progress in this country was always slow, and yet the country had always been in the van of civilisation. No doubt in France and other countries they put off reforms until there was a revolution. When the change did come, it was more drastic. But their own method was far and away the best.

Mr J. WICKS (Colchester) said that although he had been engaged in practical work in the Poor Law for a good many years, he frankly confessed he did not feel in the position to deal off-hand with the very interesting and valuable paper they had had placed before them. But they must all recognise the vital necessity there was for a reformation of the mode of assessment indicated in that paper. The anomalies of the incidence of both local and Imperial taxes were continually pressed upon them. He remembered that many years ago at Ipswich he had the temerity to move an amendment to the effect that the Poor Rates should become a national charge, and instancing the case of a man, a large stockbroker, or a man having considerable income from funds, and yet perfectly exempt from the charge for the maintenance of the poor, except so far as his residence might make him so. That was a crying anomaly, and if they could get some alteration in that direction it would be a very great help indeed. He did not know whether it was intended to take any resolution upon the subject. It had occurred to him that they might turn that Conference to a good practical result if they adopted some kind of resolution which was adopted by the Norfolk Chamber of Agriculture and the Norfolk County Council, expressing the desire that the amendment of Local Taxation should be pressed forward.

Dr H. ASHWIN (Lexden and Winstree) said they were all very much indebted to the reader of the paper, as he had evidently given

a considerable amount of time and attention to the question. They were all more or less familiar with it, as they all more or less suffered from the inequalities of Local Taxation. Although no definite resolution had been brought before them, he thought that if they could only get the Government to move in the matter it would be a very good thing. The Chairman opened a wider field than the paper itself. If only they could get their three Councils to be really thoroughly composed of men who were capable of doing the work, he would feel they were doing a good thing. The County Council, he thought, was admirably adapted to its purpose, and he had also great respect for the District Councils. He hoped he would not offend any one present if he said he had not that respect for the Parish Councils. They were very often unfit to attend to the duties entrusted to them, and were disposed to meddle with things which did not come within their province. He would therefore regret to see Parish Councils supersede their Committees in the localities where the latter were at work. If Mr Wicks would move a resolution in accordance with the terms of the Norfolk resolution, he would have much pleasure in seconding it. He could only say he hoped the Government would take up the question.

Mr WICKS proposed:—"That the present system by which one and the same property is or may be assessed for tax and rating purposes by four different authorities, viz., for Property Tax, County Rate, Union (including Poor, Sanitary, District, School Board, &c.), and for Land Tax, is an anomaly. This Council desires, therefore, to urge upon the President of the Local Government Board the pressing necessity for the immediate passing of a Bill which will have the effect of simplifying matters, by enacting that there shall be one assessment for all tax and rating purposes, such an assessment to be made on one basis common to the whole of England."

Mr E. W. MOORE (Blything) said that before the resolution was put he would like to mention that he had come a long distance for that Conference. He rose before the sun was visible above the horizon of the German Ocean, and he would like to see some discussion before the matter was disposed of. He was at one time an Overseer, had been a Churchwarden, neither of them very pleasant offices, and was now a member of the Town Council of his borough. He was still in the dark as to the manner in which assessments were arrived at. A property was assessed at £20 a year. New overseers were appointed who said this has been assessed at a small amount. It is then put up to double its former rating. Notice is given, and an appeal follows to the Assessment Committee. That body says the assessment is a mistake; puts it back to the former figure; and then three months after that time that property may be sold at three or four times the capital value of the rent at which it stood in the rate books. There ought to be some authority which should fix the rating of property. A company was floated in his neighbourhood, and the public asked how it was that their important property (accord-

ing to the prospectus) had been standing at a low figure. Immediately the rating was trebled, and that was considered to be a perfect way of assessing property. Again, property has been standing at £75 per year, and after additions and improvements to the building it goes up to £375 in the rate books; and then without any notice or appeal the Assessment Committee reduce the assessment to £275. What right has the Assessment Committee to alter the assessment without an appeal from the owners of the property? The assessment system was rotten from beginning to end. He was agent for a property which had been let—small houses at 1s. 8d. and 2s. per week. Notice was served upon the owners to drain and provide suitable sanitary accommodation. The work was done at a very great expense; they saw that these poor people could hardly pay 1s. 8d. and 2s., and therefore the owners did not increase the rent; yet immediately the water is laid on and the drainage done the Assessment Committee popped up the assessment 50 per cent. They said, You are getting more rent for the property. They were not getting more rent; they were hardly getting a return on the money they had had to expend in improvements. Mr Sancroft Holmes said that unless they lived in a town, they were really not in a position to say how they ought to be assessed. In towns they had to pay larger rates, and every morning there was a tap at the door to know if they would subscribe to this or that. In the towns there was the Parish Church, a dissenting place of worship, the Roman Catholics, and many others, as well as societies, and a man never knew what he had to subscribe to if he was in business. In the country there was generally only the Church. There ought to be some good from these meetings. He never knew of any good from them yet. A lot of bashful people got together and said nothing until they got outside, when they could talk till further orders.

Mr CHARLES HUTLEY (Lexden and Winstree) said Mr Holmes wished that rates could be levied according to ability. How was ability to be ascertained? If any one could tell them that, they would be very pleased.

Mr A. F. VULLIAMY (Hon. Sec. to the Conference) said that in Brussels, and in Belgium generally, they had a system which might teach them something in this country. Persons there were made to pay to a great extent according to ability, as judged by their house and furniture, and the proportion paid by them to Imperial taxation. He would suggest that something of the sort be adopted in this country. But first of all, he would like to give an instance of the unfairness of the present system. Take four or five people living in Ipswich, all deriving equal benefits from the town—one is a lodger in the house, the next is an ordinary inhabitant living on his means, the next is a shopkeeper, the next a farmer, the last a clergyman. The first is not taxed at all; it is said he will pay indirectly in the rent of his lodgings, but as a matter of fact rents of lodgings are regulated by the law of supply and demand. He may pay very little. The next will pay may be on

the assessment of £50 a year. The next, requiring a large shop, will have to pay perhaps on £100 a year. The next, as a farmer, with a holding at £400 a year, pays rates on the whole of that £400 a year. Then there is the clergyman depending on the tithes; he pays on the whole of his income. Now it is obvious that those persons, although they derive almost the same advantages, are taxed on a totally different basis. He would suggest that according to what persons paid as income-tax they should pay towards local taxation, which would go far to meet inequalities. They now pay the eightpence, and he thought that in future they should pay an additional penny, which should go towards diminishing the inequalities which at present exist in local taxation. He made that suggestion to the Local Taxation Committee, and he thought it would be something of a solution of the difficulty. He entirely agreed with Mr Holmes that there ought to be but one assessment for all purposes. It was a most cumbrous system that of assessment by different bodies, and all founded on one basis, but varying very much. The starting-point of the assessment was the Overseers of the parish. He did not for a moment say that they could have a better body than the Overseers to do the work. They knew very well about their own parish, but nothing about the remainder of the district. What they wanted was a body of Assistant Overseers who should be spread over a larger district, and would constantly bring to bear on assessments a wider knowledge than the Overseers possessed. He would have the Assistant Overseers appointed for several parishes, instead of, as was usual now, for only one parish. Where men now work for four or five parishes the work was generally well done, because the man knew well enough about his own surroundings. If they could have more competent Assistant Overseers, they would form a better starting-point for valuation. Much had been said about Assessment Committees. He thought they did their best, but it would materially assist them if they had always on that body, as a matter of right, the surveyor of taxes for the district. He gets a large amount of local knowledge spread over the whole district, and if he could be *ex-officio* a member of the Committees, it would be a great advantage, and would result in the work being done as the Committees wished it to be done. With regard to Scotland, they were informed, and it was the fact undoubtedly, that Overseers were appointed in certain cases by the Government, and it was suggested that the county should do so in England. County Councils ought to have expert Assessors. However, a county in Scotland was not the same thing as a county in England, and they were apt to be misled by the similarity of terms in things which were entirely different.

Mr J. G. BLYTH (Colchester) said it would look presumptuous on his part to speak on the subject, but he had been recently appointed on the Assessment Committee of his Union, and there were some things which puzzled him. He knew of a Committee, he had better not say where, which felt doubtful about valuing certain properties in their district. They went to the expense of engaging a

specialist to value the property, and the owners subsequently appealed to the Assessment Committee and the Quarter Sessions, and what the former did not reduce the latter did. That was a curious state of affairs. He sometimes thought that there was a feeling in that borough that the Poor Law should be administered by the Town Council. He would be very sorry if that were acted upon, as he thought there were a great many men and women, members of Boards of Guardians, who did their work well, and with an absence of political animosity.

Mr J. SANCROFT HOLMES, replying to the discussion, said he was only too well aware of how imperfectly he had set forth the case. The bulk of criticism had been directed at Assessment Committees, quite a secondary part of the subject of the paper. He had the misfortune to be the chairman of the Assessment Committee, a member of the County Rate Basis Committee, and an Income-Tax Commissioner, as well as a Land-Tax Commissioner. He could not imagine a more disagreeable duty being cast upon a gentleman than to assess his neighbour's property. It took an enormous amount of time, and required a judicial mind, and when it was done they could not perhaps feel much satisfaction. He was at present at war with his own County Council, and he had that morning received a letter from that body which seemed to him to raise the question of how far a County Council had the right to decline to revise the County Rate Basis on the application of the Local Authority. He was very glad to say that the question of a uniform basis of taxation was the one point upon which all the members of the Royal Commission on Taxation now sitting were agreed. He understood that the great advantage of the Scotch system was that there was a fresh valuation made every year either by the County Council or by the officers entrusted with the Imperial Taxation Returns. That system was most satisfactory, for it gave frequent opportunities for revision of rating. Then no substantial injustice could be done. He could not answer the question as to the measure of ability to pay local rates. He must refer his interrogator to the Act of Elizabeth. The intention of that Act was that all classes of property should pay poor rates, and the reason that some did not now do so was because of the inconvenience of rating personal property. It was only exempt by the Act of 1840. He understood that when the latter Act was passed Parliament postponed the consideration of the question of liability of personalty to pay poor rates, and it had been postponed every session since. That was the only answer he could give as to ability to pay rates. [A Member—"Squeezability."] It was just as much to the interests of owners of personal property as of any other class of the community that every one should contribute fairly towards local requirements.

The CHAIRMAN said that before putting the resolution, he would like to show Mr Moore that the burdens in the country were just as heavy as those of residents in the towns. They also had their

various places of worship, but nobody was bound to subscribe to other denominations than his own, and certainly nobody ought to subscribe to places of worship for the purposes of business. There were hospitals and charities, and altogether those who lived in the country had quite as many calls on their purses as the residents in towns. In a small area like a parish a body such as a Parish Council ought to be able to administer public business. He did not care whether they were called a Parish Council or a Burial Board—if they would work any better under another name, by all means let them have it. He was very much struck with Mr Vulliamy's remarks, but he felt it would be very difficult to rate a man according to his ability.

The resolution was then carried unanimously (with the following rider proposed by Mr Holmes), "and that the Government be urged to pass as soon as possible a measure which will have the effect of securing that all kinds of property, real and personal, shall in future contribute equitably to local as well as Imperial taxation."

The election of delegates to the Central Poor Law Conference then took place, with the following results:—

Mr J. Wicks for Essex ;

Rev. C. J. Steward for Suffolk ; and

Mr C. M. Montgomerie for Norfolk.

On the question of the time and place of the 1898 meeting,

The CHAIRMAN said November was an awkward month for some Guardians, gentlemen who were fond of hunting and shooting.

Mr E. W. MOORE (Blything) said if the Guardians in question preferred hunting and shooting to alleviating the distress of their poor neighbours, let them go hunting and shooting. Get rid of them, and elect somebody else. Business before pleasure. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN said he agreed with Mr Moore, that if hunting and shooting was all they thought of, they are better off a Board than on it, yet they must have regard to the reasonable wishes of members.

A Lady Guardian expressed a wish that the meeting should be held in June.

This was supported by all the other Lady Guardians, and it was suggested that Norwich should be the place of meeting.

Resolved accordingly: That the next Conference be held at Norwich in June 1898.

Mr VULLIAMY (Hon. Secretary) then read the following paper:—

POWERS OF DETENTION IN WORK-
HOUSES.

BY MR A. F. VULLIAMY,

Clerk to the Ipswich Board of Guardians.

THE object of the Poor Law is, first, the relief of the destitute ; secondly, the cure of the sick poor ; and thirdly, the diminution of pauperism. Some may object to this statement, being of opinion that the first, and the first only, is the object of the Poor Law ; while others would admit that the cure of the sick poor is also one of its objects, but would deny that the diminution of pauperism, however desirable it may be, is one of the purposes for which the Poor Law was established and exists. The excellent Poor Law infirmaries, however, which are now to be found in all populous places, and the skill and attention devoted to the sick inmates of the Workhouse, even where there are no separate infirmaries, show that the cure of the sick poor receives an ever-increasing share of the attention of Poor Law administrators ; while it has ever been their endeavour to break the continuity of pauperism in families by so educating and apprenticing the children entrusted to their care that they may engage in the conflict of life on equal terms with their more fortunate neighbours.

A very little reflection will show that destitution should, in any well-regulated State, be so relieved that pauperism may be checked rather than fostered ; or, in other words, that the diminution of pauperism may be constantly a purpose of those whose work it is to alleviate its sufferings. This principle has been, and is, acted upon, so far as children are concerned. Is it reasonable that it should be confined to children—*i.e.*, to those under the age of sixteen years ? Surely not, if the good of the State, or of the individual, demands

that it should be extended to others. This has been recognised in the case of lunatics, whose liberties are restricted for their own good and for the good of the State. But if a pauper cannot be certified by the medical man called in by the magistrate as a lunatic, no one has any power to restrict his or her liberty, however much it may be felt that in that particular case unrestricted liberty is an undoubted evil. Again, is there anything so binding in the tie which unites parents and their children that, while the law severs that tie in cases where the way in which the power of the parent is exercised is prejudicial to the physical well-being of the child, it should not sever it where its whole bringing up, though not absolutely cruel, so hampers it in after-life as to condemn it to lifelong pauperism? Surely it is right that parents who neglect their duties should be deprived of their rights. Or, once more, is the liberty of the subject so sacred a thing that an able-bodied man should be permitted to waste his life, practically unrestrained, in idleness and vice, if he so wishes it, at the expense of his more industrious neighbours? Surely that man's career as a whole is more criminal than that of many a man condemned to prison for a momentary yielding to temptation.

I cannot but think that the truth is being gradually recognised that there is need of further restrictions of the liberty of certain inmates of Workhouses, both for their good and for the good of the State, and that there should be, therefore, increased power of detention of certain classes in Workhouses. Which these classes are, what the power should be, to whom given, and under what restriction, I propose to consider. First, then, as to the classes whose liberties might with advantage to themselves and the State be further restricted. Foremost I should place the feeble-minded. There are men and women, we all know, who need mental props all their lives, who, rightly

trained, rightly guided, may do such good work as their partially developed intelligences will enable them to accomplish ; untrained, unguided, they will drift into evil from sheer inability to recognise it. Why does a child need restriction ? Why is it unable to use liberty aright ? Not merely on account of its weakness of frame, but also because of its immaturity of mind. Surely, then, if while the body grows, the mind remains stationary, it continues to need restriction, it is still unable to use its liberty aright. If both the medical officer of the Workhouse and its chaplain unite in saying that a girl who has attained the age of sixteen years has still but the mind of a child, there should be a power in some body to raise the age at which she should be considered fit to have the disposal of her time, of her liberty, of her self. If it is found, after every attempt has been made to strengthen her mental faculties by special training, that she is still but a young child in mind, and will so remain all her life, it is best for her, as it is for the community, that she should be treated as a child all her life, with just so much liberty as is good for her, and no more. It is melancholy to think how many girls there are whose undeveloped mental faculties render them easy victims to unprincipled libertinism, perpetuating their deficiencies in their illegitimate offspring, whose lives might have been bright and useful had their liberty been restrained.

And if there should be power to restrict the liberty of the feeble-minded, still more should some authority be able to withdraw children from the charge of unnatural parents, not only in cases of ill-treatment and such neglect as is calculated to injure their physical health, or cause them unnecessary suffering, but also in other cases where the children are likely to grow up vicious or weakly through the faults of their parents. Let me give a typical case. A deserted wife with three children was in a Workhouse, the three children being brought up in a separate school. In the same

Workhouse was a widower with three children, brought up in the same school. The man and the woman somehow communicated with each other, and both gave notice of discharge the same day. They left the next day with their children, and went and lived together a fortnight in a two-roomed cottage, and all then returned to the Workhouse and school respectively, the children filthy in person and polluted in mind. Surely this is a thing to be prevented, if possible, for the good of the children ; for what chance have they in after-life, what hope is there but that they should swell the ranks of the vicious and depraved ? I quite see that there are objections to the discharge of parents from Workhouses without their children. If at all a usual practice, the evils that might result from the consequent increased indifference of parents to their children might outweigh the good effected in particular instances. Still there might, and I think should be a power for some authority to sever the tie which binds together parents and children in cases not at present provided for.

I come now to a third class, viz., those that are known as the “ins-and-outs”—men and women, but men more especially, who make a practice of leading lives of nearly constant idleness, and obtain board and lodging as often as, and practically as long as they please within the walls of the Workhouse. Who benefits by their liberty ? Not themselves, for it encourages them in idleness and dissipation ; not the community that reaps no benefit from their toil, and has to maintain them the greater part of their lives. It would surely be in every respect advantageous that there should be a power of longer detention than the present maximum of seventy-two hours, vested in such hands and so safeguarded that there should be no danger of the reasonable liberty of the subject being in any way interfered with. It is a kind of life into which a man gradually drifts, and the longer he

abstains from work the greater his disinclination for it. Many of us have felt the same disinclination even after a month's holiday. The best remedy for it is regular work, compulsory if need be. If "ins-and-outs" could be kept within a Workhouse, or some kindred institution not being a prison, for a period extending over not a day or two only, but weeks or even months, there might be a chance of here and there one being reformed, and many more being prevented from becoming such recurrent paupers from a dread of lengthened confinement, with deprivation of the luxuries which they most highly value.

Granted, then, that there should be greater power of detention in Workhouses for the feeble-minded, the children of idle or vicious parents, and ins-and-outs, in whom should this power be vested, and how exercised? Personally I should feel quite satisfied that this power should be vested in, and exercised by, Boards of Guardians. But popular prejudice has to be reckoned with, and popular delusions. One of the latter is, that a person who becomes a Guardian at once loses all kindliness of heart, and becomes nothing else but a Poor Law automaton. I think, therefore, that it would be wise to follow the precedents set in the Lunacy Acts, and give the power of detention to magistrates, aided, in the case of the feeble-minded, by some surgeon called in by them. There surely could be no abuse of a power exercised by men to whom the State has given judicial authority, at the request of public bodies, to whom every such restriction of individual liberty means, possibly prospective advantage, but certainly immediate additional expense.

I know the difficulty that there is in the way of legislation on the subject. All Englishmen feel, and rightly, the importance of the maintenance of our liberties; and there is no subject upon which it is easier to raise a party cry than an apparent infringement of them. It is right that we should value our

liberties. To it we owe the growth of our national character, our greatness, our power. But there is no reason why we should make of the freedom which we prize an idol to be worshipped, a Moloch to which we should sacrifice the lives and happiness of those whose Guardians we are.

It would perhaps be as well if I were to point out exactly what course I could propose should be followed with regard to each of the above-mentioned three classes, taking in each case what seems to me to be the line of least resistance. With regard to the feeble-minded, I would have the Guardians, on the certificates of the medical officer and chaplain of the Workhouse, that the pauper, being over sixteen years of age, is of such defective mental condition that he or she is unfit to earn his or her own living, and would or would not be benefited by special instruction, apply to a magistrate for an order constituting them the guardians of such feeble-minded person for a definite period. The magistrate would then personally examine the pauper in respect of whom the application was made, and make an order, if he thought fit, giving the Guardians the same power over such person as they would have over an orphan child under sixteen years of age. This order would enable the Guardians to send him or her to a suitable home, for training, if possible ; if not, for care. The order would be renewable from time to time on fresh certificates. With regard to children of tramps, of "ins-and-outs," and of vicious parents generally, I would give the magistrates, on application of the Guardians, and on being satisfied that the separation of the child from the parent would be beneficial to such child, power to make an order constituting the Board of Guardians on their application the guardians of the subject of the application, until, if a boy, he should have attained the age of sixteen years, if a girl, of eighteen years.

As to "ins-and-outs," I would follow, to a certain

extent, the example set by the United States of America. There, I believe, a man requiring relief has to state why he requires it, and if he is out of work, how long he expects it will be before he can get work, and he signs an agreement to remain in the Workhouse for that period. Acting on somewhat the same lines, I would give the Guardians power to make, in every case in which a pauper had been more than three times in one year an applicant for relief, an application to the magistrates for an order for the permanent detention of the pauper in the Workhouse for such time as the magistrates might decide upon, not exceeding, except with the consent of the pauper, a period of three months. Such order being made, the pauper would not be able to discharge himself before the expiration of the period mentioned in it, except with the consent of the Guardians, but the Guardians would have power to discharge him at any time before the expiration of the period, with his consent, or even without, if they found suitable work for him. The good which would be effected by such power would be incalculable. It would, in a great measure, eliminate the evil of encouragement to idleness and extravagance, which is a necessary concomitant of the present system of poor relief. A man does not usually become an idle loafer all at once ; and fewer would enter upon the downward path which leads to the formation of such a character, or continue in it when once commenced, if they were not taught to look upon the Guardians as a special providence ministering to their wants, and consequently to live heedless of the future, only anxious to obtain a maximum of enjoyment from a minimum of toil. To a man in whom the process of deterioration has only commenced, through, perhaps, a period of enforced idleness from slackness of work, steady work for a comparatively lengthy period would mean reform ; while to the confirmed loafer such steady work, without beer or tobacco, would be an almost unbearable existence, to be avoided if possible.

At the root of many desirable reforms lies increased power of detention in Workhouses, and these reforms cannot be carried out while a pauper can leave a Workhouse practically when he pleases. If sense and not sentiment, a real care for the poor rather than a seeming consideration which is actual cruelty, is to guide our actions, let us urge on the Local Government Board to apply for, and educate our legislators till they grant, the additional power which Guardians need for the rational relief of the poor, powers which would certainly not be abused.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN said he thought they had to thank Mr Vulliamy for the extremely clear manner in which he put forward his views. The paper afforded plenty of opportunities for discussion, and he hoped they would have, if not an acrimonious, an animated and profitable discussion. With regard to the feeble-minded, he was glad to say that in Suffolk successful efforts had been made in the direction of providing a home where they could be technically trained, and in that way have their condition considerably improved.

Dr H. ASHWIN said that Mr Vulliamy did him the honour to ask him to read a paper, though he was not one of those who kept Mr Vulliamy waiting till the last minute before expressing his inability to comply with the request. He supposed that in common with his own Union, all the Unions there represented did detain the casual paupers for a longer period than was formerly the general rule. The carrying out of the regulations on that head had had a considerable effect in diminishing the number of tramps, although, now that the tramps were getting used to the rules, their numbers were increasing again. The paper suggested several thoughts with regard to the treatment of the imbecile. It was a matter which was very much discussed at the Conference held at Ipswich, and they had then the advantage of hearing an exceedingly interesting paper read by a lady as to how imbeciles ought to be treated. It was a cruel thing to send an imbecile girl of sixteen years of age uncared for into the world. Something ought to be done. But the question, as in the case of the care of children and the detention of vagrants, was, "Who is to pay for it?" He knew of country Unions where it was felt that the sooner they got rid of inmates the better. The first thing to be done to meet the case must be to make the cost an Imperial matter. People who had spent their best years in London or the large towns, but had not saved, returned to their different districts to be a burden on the local rates. The State must recog-

nise its duty towards the poor, and not leave the whole of the burden to the local rates. Then with regard to the treatment of vagrants, he sometimes wondered whether those who paid visits to the workhouses were the worst of the tramps. He thought there was a large number of people passing up and down the country who never entered the workhouses at all. The Guardians had no power over them while they remained in the common lodging-houses. How could the tramp afford to go to the lodging-houses? By going along the country lanes, where he could always pick up enough for his purpose. If only people could be instructed not to relieve tramps, a very great step would be taken in the diminution of vagrancy. He often wished they could, in one respect, go back from these enlightened times to the dark days of old, and treat all tramps as rogues and vagabonds. Those who would not work should be whipped. It would be a good thing.

Mr S. R. ANNESS (Ipswich) said it had often troubled him to find that weak-minded people were sent adrift. If they could be properly taken care of, it would result in a great saving in the end. By letting such persons free they were bringing upon the ratepayers a far greater burden than by keeping them in the first instance. With regard to the children, if they had a good training, and a fair start in life, it would be a great advantage to the State.

Mr J. WICKS (Colchester) said there could not be two opinions as to the necessity for special powers to be granted to Guardians for dealing with imbeciles. There was now in his own Union an old soldier who was in receipt of a pension of about fourteen shillings a week, and about three months ago, on drawing the pension (£6 or £7), he went away, leaving his wife in the workhouse, until his money was all spent, when he returned to the House. That was representative of a great many cases. Fourteen shillings a week was enough to enable a man and woman to keep themselves in a tidy home. He (Mr Wicks) thought the Guardians should have power to compel that man to take another course. There was another man and his wife and three or four children who had been in and out of the workhouse several times this year. Guardians ought to have the power to detain such cases. Many people talked as though the fact of a person becoming a Poor Law Guardian was tantamount to having renounced all the higher and finer feelings. They were very anxious about the liberty of the subject in this country, and rightly so. It seemed to him that that might be safeguarded by requiring the certificate of the medical officer and the chaplain, as well as examination by the Guardians. At the Central Conference this year he expressed the view that the Poor Law was very much dependent upon those who administered it, and that it possessed sufficient elasticity for the good of the poor and of the community. The vital defect of the existing system was the want of classification. They, in Ipswich, had gone a long way to solve the problem, because they had that splendid St John's Home, where they could

deal with the most promising of the cases that came within their sphere of influence. The young ought not to be brought into daily contact with the dejected and degraded adult pauper. It was the vital defect of the present system.

Mrs J. P. COBBOLD (Ipswich) said that the children of the tramps were always the most pitiable objects in the Union. But what would be the result if they adopted those children? When the subject of the feeble-minded was brought forward at Ipswich, the Chairman said women's work was very nice, but it was full of "sweet unreasonableness." When she remembered the great work Miss Twining had done, which had resulted practically in the establishment of State hospitals in place of a parody of nursing, she was proud of that "sweet unreasonableness." Then again, the Brabazon Employment Scheme was another development of "sweet unreasonableness" on the part of Miss Stacey. Miss Clifford's work amongst feeble-minded girls was one more instance of the same "sweet unreasonableness." (Cheers.) Miss Clifford would tell them that feeble-minded was not quite the term for many of these girls who had passed through her hands, afterwards became self-supporting, and would, it was hoped, never become chargeable to the rates again. Dr Warner was employed by the School Board for London to go through the schools and select children for instruction in the five or six schools specially instituted for the feeble-minded. Though that was an expensive beginning, it would eventually result in the saving of hundreds of thousands and perhaps of millions of pounds. But they could not wait for developments of that kind. They were told of the sad state of the young women's wards in the Workhouses. Those young women were hopeless, and they remained so. But in creating a home for them at Saxtead, it was hoped that great benefit would result to them. She had made a study of the question during the three years she had been a Guardian. The rent of the home at Saxtead had been guaranteed for two years, and they would be very glad of any help.

Mrs SEWELL (Colchester) said she could not be a Guardian again another day but for the children. Three years ago, when she was first elected, she saw the need of classification. It was everlastingly put forward that any improvement cost money. They must have more accommodation if they would classify cases properly. The training of the children was a most important thing, and she did not see how it could be properly carried out while the children were associated with the adult paupers. She hoped that in time the children would be entirely removed from contact with the adult paupers, which was most harmful to the young. With reference to the tramp children, she could not see exactly what could be done, but the question would have to be dealt with. It was wrong that the present state of affairs should be allowed.

Mr FRANK FOLKARD (Lexden and Winstree) said he was deeply interested in the subject, having been a Guardian for many years and Chairman of a Boarding-out Committee. As long as tramps were

allowed to have control of children, they were breeding the paupers of the future. Who was to pay for any improved method of dealing with them? The cost ought to be borne by the Imperial Exchequer. When the Guardians had got control of the children, what were they to do with them? As long as Guardians mixed the children with the adults in the Workhouses, never would they be rid of the evil of pauperism. He was glad to see that the last few remaining children in the Workhouses were to be sent into homes, where they would be taken care of by Christian women—yes, he repeated the phrase, Christian women—who would use their gentle influence upon the children, and in time eradicate the taint of pauperism. It was sometimes said that if the children of tramps were placed in comfortable homes, the parents would return and demand the children, and make it a means of extorting money. That must be prevented in some way. The good of the children ought to be their sole consideration. He looked upon a child as a lever with which to move the world.

Mrs COOPER (Great Yarmouth) said she was glad to state that her Board had adopted the boarding-out system for orphans or children with only one parent. She would like to know whether they could do any more in the shape of boarding-out than they did at present.

Mr MOORE (Blything) said that the subject of the paper was the powers of detention in Workhouses, but the speakers had hardly touched upon it at all. The main question was, what were they to do with a certain class of paupers on the attainment of their sixteenth year? In his opinion the Guardians ought to have the right to say, "You are not fit to go out into the world; we will detain you, for your own sake, and for the good of the community." If these feeble-minded persons left the Workhouses, they were certain to breed paupers. There was not only that class, but the dissolute persons who were continually entering and leaving the Workhouses—pensioners, for instance. The Guardians did not know that the man had a pension; he went out periodically and returned drunk. The Guardians ought to have power to detain such men, and to make them and other able-bodied paupers pay for their maintenance. As to tramps, the clergy were a tender-hearted class, and encouraged vagrancy. He knew of a case where a tramp went to a clergyman, who could speak German. Tramps were conjurers in these matters. That tramp could speak German, and he found out that the clergyman had been at Heidelberg. The tramp, of course, said he had been there too; and was now returning from Edinburgh University in consequence of his being too poor to keep himself. He was going to London, but feared that his shabby appearance would not allow him to present himself at the German Consulate. Thereupon the parson gave him a suit of clothes and a clean shirt, and told him that he would give him a railway ticket to London. Next morning the parson discovered that the tramp, who could not be found, had sent the clothes on in a parcel to a second-hand clothes shop in London, which was kept going by means of clothes obtained in this

way. (Oh, oh, and laughter.) He (Mr Moore) was glad "to hear that smile." It was a true story. He agreed with every word of Mr Vulliamy's paper. When they got the tramps, keep them, and not only detain the imbeciles, but the able-bodied.

The Rev. J. G. BREWSTER (Stratford St Mary) said he always sternly discouraged vagrancy. [Mr MOORE—Then you are one of a thousand, and a wise man.] Mr Moore said the clergy were very culpable in regard to tramps, but he (the speaker) thought that Mr Moore must know very little about the clergy to think so. (Hear, hear.)

Mr SANCROFT HOLMES pointed out that it had only to be proved that a person who received relief had some other means of subsistence for that person to be liable to conviction as a rogue and vagabond. He hoped that his own Board were not relieving any pensioners. One of the outdoor paupers some time ago complained to the police that he had lost £14 or £15. The Board believed that the complaint was well founded, and consequently, although the man was over eighty years of age, they prosecuted him as a warning to others. It was fair to say that they asked for a nominal penalty only.

Mr BLYTH said it seemed a pity that children should be dragged about from Union to Union. Where children could not be detained without their mother, she should be detained too, and the father ought to be prosecuted as a criminal. As to boarding-out, he feared that the children are too often looked upon merely as bringing in so many shillings a week.

Mr FOLKARD said the Ladies' Committees generally saw that the children were well looked after.

The CHAIRMAN said he thanked Mr Vulliamy for his very suggestive paper. With a good system of visiting, boarding-out was the very best thing they could do with the children. But the system could be applied only to orphan and deserted children. It would be a great blessing in many cases if they could take the children away from their parents. There was, however, this danger, that there were a great many parents who would be only too glad to get rid of their children. He hoped the day was soon coming when there would be a County Asylum for idiots and the feeble-minded. There was a good asylum in the district, but it did not suffice for the whole of East Anglia. He wished Mrs Cobbold every success in the good work she had undertaken. The discussion had been very interesting.

Mr VULLIAMY proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman (who had to leave early).

This was seconded by Mr WICKS, and carried unanimously.

In replying, the CHAIRMAN said that though the attendance at the Conference was not large, the greatest interest had been shown in the subjects under discussion.

Mr WICKS then took the chair, moving a vote of thanks to the writers of the papers. This was carried unanimously.

MR VULLIAMY said that the effect of the increased powers

of detention he had suggested would be that Guardians would be empowered to detain not only the orphan and deserted children, but others if necessary. The magistrates would have to confirm an order for detaining an adult pauper. No Board would apply for such an order unless it was absolutely necessary. The children of the tramps did not belong to any particular Union, and their cost should be a national and not a local charge.

Mr WHITE (Colchester) proposed, and Mr MOORE seconded, a vote of thanks to the Mayor of Colchester for the use of the Town Hall for the Conference. This was carried.

The proceedings then terminated.

Yorkshire District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE FOR THE COUNTY
OF YORKSHIRE, HELD AT LEEDS ON FRIDAY,
12TH NOVEMBER 1897.

Mr H. CHILD, *Chairman of the Leeds Board of
Guardians*, PRESIDING.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference :—

BARNSELEY—

Bedford, A. F.
Holmes, Thomas.

BEVERLEY—

Abram, T.
Derbyshire, George.
Hobson, C. W. (Clerk).
Park, Alice.

BRADFORD—

Bentham, J. H.
Crowther, G. M.
Guy, T. A.
Isett, Geo. H.
Kershaw, Wm.
Moser, Florence.
Stott, Ellen A.

BRAMLEY—

Tatham, James.

BRIDLINGTON—

Gray, C. (Clerk).
Greame, Y. G. Lloyd.
Medforth, R. (Chairman).
Sutcliffe, Mrs.

DEWSBURY—

Brown, Joseph.
Knowles, J. B.
Pickersgill, C. P.
Sheard, Mrs.
Smith, William (Chairman).
Taylor, Mrs.
Vero, William.

HALIFAX—

Hughes, Rev. T. A. A.
Kippax, Smith.
Ormerod, Mrs.
Strange, E. A. (Assistant Clerk).
Tillotson, J. W.

HOLBECK—

Armitage, Gill.
Garnett, Robt.
Moore, J. B. (Clerk).
Sunderland, T.

HOWDEN—

Hutchinson, Wm. (Vice-Chairman)

HUDDERSFIELD—

Bentley, Mr.
Cocking, Mrs.
Collins, Rev. H., M.A.
Davies, Rev. A. J.
Fitton, C. (Chairman).
Hadfield, George.
Kaye, Mr.
Rigby, E. A. (Clerk).
Siddon, Miss.
Stuttard, Mr.
Sykes, Mr.
Turner, Mr.
Whitwam, E. (Vice-Chairman).
Woodhead, Mr.

HUNSLET—

Banks, J.
Hirst, Joseph (Chairman).
Mee, Fred. W. (Clerk).

HUNSL ET—*continued*—

Robb, John.
Shaw, A.

KEIGHLEY—

Arthur, D.
Clough, W.
Foster, Mrs.
Hopkinson, M.
Newell, J.
Spencer, G. E. (Clerk).

KINGSTON-UPON-HULL—

Farrell, James.
Fieldman, A.
Pickering, R. S. (Governor).
Winter, R. H. (Clerk).

KNARESBOROUGH—

Hindill, James.
Horspool, Henry.
Petty, John R.
Pickard, Jane.
Smith, J. (Clerk).

LEEDS—

Allan, J.
Baines, Miss.
Baines, Margaret.
Bettison, Charles.
Child, H. (Chairman).
Dodgshun, Thos. Henry.
Ford, J. H. (Clerk).
Garland, R. C.
Hartley, Lieut.-Colonel Joseph.
Hobson, A.
Hogg, Thomas B.
Hoggard, A.
Hutton, J.
Lawson, E. E.
Lister, George.
Pickersgill, F. J.
Preston, T.
Stansfield, Rev. W. H.
Townend, Robert.
Wainwright, Walter.
Wilson, J.
Womersley, Mrs.
Woods, T.

MIDDLESBOROUGH—

Barron, S.
M'Nulty, B.
Mosses, Mrs.
Walker, H. V. (Assistant Clerk).

NORTH BIERLEY—

Brigg, D.
Gaunt, W.

NORTH BRIERLEY—*continued*—

Hardisty, J.
Helmsley, J. E. (Clerk).
King, Mrs.
Longbottom, A. (Chairman).
Rivell, Richard.
Roberts, J. U. S.

PENISTONE—

Fountain, Joseph.
Laycock, T.
Smith, Wm.

PONTEFRACT—

Bentley, J. W.
Glover, W. A. (Clerk).

RIPON—

Mason, J. (Vice-Chairman).
Highmoor, F.

SCULCOATES—

Hopper, J. W.
Jackson, W. (Assistant Clerk).
Lawson, W.
Layfield, Mrs.

SEDBERGH—

Inman, Richard.
Lodge, John R.
Pickering, Robert.
Robinson, J.

SHEFFIELD—

Booker, A. E. (Clerk).
Chappell, Mrs.

SKIPTON—

Fletcher, Richard.
Proctor, W. A.

WAKEFIELD—

Denton, Percy M. (Assistant Clerk).
Haigh, Nathaniel.
Spurr, Edwin (Vice-Chairman).
Stubley, Anne.
Wordsworth, T. (Chairman).

WETHERBY—

Booth, J. A.
Rowntree, A.

WHARFEDALE—

Fawkes, Mrs.
Knowles, Mrs.

YORK—

Wragge, Alderman V.
Harrison, C.

Hon. Secy.—Arthur T. Longbotham, Clerk to the Guardians, Halifax.

VISITORS.

Gibson, Miss, Birmingham.
 Lowndes, Miss, Northern Workhouse Nursing Association.
 Rathbone, Miss, Liverpool.
 Ashton, Miss, Liverpool.
 Dolan, T. M., M.D., J.P., Halifax.
 Rhodes, J. M., M.D., Chorlton Union.

Unions not represented:—

Aysgarth, Bedale, Doncaster, Driffeld, Easingwold, Ecclesall Bierlow, Goole, Guisborough, Helmsley, Hemsworth, Kirby Moorside, Leyburn, Malton, Northallerton, Ouseburn, Patrinton, Pateley Bridge, Pickering, Pocklington, Reeth, Richmond, Rotherham, Saddleworth, Scarborough, Selby, Settle, Skirlaugh, Stokesley, Tadcaster, Thirsk, Thorne, Todmorden, Whitby, Wortley.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

1. THE BOARDING-OUT SYSTEM AND ITS OPERATION IN THE LEEDS UNION, BY MR JAMES WILSON, *Chairman of Boarding-out and Emigration Committee, Leeds Union* - 476
2. THE NURSING OF SICK IN WORKHOUSES, BY MISS GIBSON, *Matron of the Birmingham Workhouse Infirmary* - - 497
3. POOR LAW MEDICAL ECONOMICS, BY THOMAS M. DOLAN, J.P., M.D., F.R.C.S. Edin., *Medical Officer, St Luke's Hospita', Halifax* - - - - - 509

FRIDAY, 12TH NOVEMBER.

The CHAIRMAN, in opening the proceedings, expressed his regret that the Right Hon. W. L. Jackson, M.P., had been unable to preside over the gathering. It was peculiarly fitting that such a Conference should be held in Leeds, for the city had done much to initiate important and beneficial changes in the working of our Poor Law system. The important question of the boarding-out of children might be said to have first received attention in Leeds. Three years ago also the Guardians of the city had built a Nurses' Home second to none in England, and the old system of having the sick attended to by partially trained nurses with pauper help had properly become a thing of the past. The Chairman, on behalf of the Conference, expressed his pleasure at the presence of the Lord Mayor. (Applause.)

The LORD MAYOR (Alderman C. F. TETLEY), who was very heartily received, said it certainly gave him very great pleasure to have the opportunity of meeting such a representative body of ladies and gentlemen. He felt that the interests they had at heart were so vast, the area of the district so great, and the amount of misery they were called upon to cope with so extensive, that anything proposed

for the amelioration of those who were unfortunately condemned to dwell in the workhouses of the country would be welcomed by the community at large. It was by Conferences of this sort, by co-operation, and by mutual interchange of ideas, that the truest interests of the poorer classes could best be dealt with. If Poor Law administrators selfishly stayed at home and kept to themselves any good ideas they had, they might benefit themselves for a time, but such short-sighted policy was sure to react, and in addition they would lose the stimulating influence of discussion with those who were interested in the same thing as themselves. Personally, he was particularly interested in a matter which he was sure would, sooner or later, come under the notice of Boards of Guardians throughout the country, namely, the treatment of imbeciles and the feeble-minded as separated from the lunatic pure and simple. He had for many years taken a great interest in one of the most splendid institutions in England for the care of such people, namely, the Royal Albert Asylum at Lancaster. He could not but feel that with the increase of population the increase of imbecility must go on, and that the people who had to be dealt with would gradually assume much larger proportions than could be accommodated by charitable institutions. It behoved all Boards of Guardians, in their classification of paupers, to consider some scheme which might be advantageous to the imbeciles and just to the rest of the community. As they knew, the danger due to imbeciles being at large in the streets was very great, and unless they were subject to some restraint, they were apt to get woefully astray, and the results to the community might be most disastrous. (Applause.) If the charitable treatment of pauper imbeciles could be introduced into the programme of every Board of Guardians, it would be of considerable service. He could not indicate the manner in which it would be best to carry this out—whether by each Board of Guardians separately looking after imbecile children, or whether by the co-operation of several Boards. It was a subject which he thought they, as Guardians of the poor, might very well take up, and he was sure that those who had shown themselves interested in the boarding-out of children were the people to whom might be referred the treatment of the imbeciles in the classification of the elderly paupers. He hoped that the discussions at the Conference would tend to promote the interests they had so deeply at heart. (Cheers.)

The Rev. T. A. A. HUGHES (Halifax) moved a vote of thanks to the Lord Mayor for his address, and this having been seconded by the Chairman, was unanimously adopted.

The LORD MAYOR replied that the service he had been able to render had been given very willingly because of the interest he took in Poor Law matters. He was sure that anything Corporations, not only in Leeds, but throughout England, could do to further the interests of Poor Law administration would be gratefully performed, and that any help given to them by that Conference would be most thankfully received. (Cheers.)

Mr ARTHUR T. LONGBOTHAM (Hon. Sec. of Conference, and Clerk to the Halifax Guardians) reported on matters dealt with at the previous Conference at Bradford, and referred principally to the proposed association of Poor Law Unions. The matter, he said, was brought before them by the Rev. Mr Aspinall, Chairman of the Halifax Guardians. It was thoroughly discussed, and approved unanimously by the delegates; and a resolution was passed calling upon the Central Conference in London to form an association as early as could conveniently be done. Mr Aspinall was requested to bring the matter before the Central Conference in London in March of this year. That was done. Mr Aspinall subsequently read his paper in London, and a resolution was passed, if not with absolute unanimity, at least, as Sir Francis Powell said, with moral unanimity, that such an association should be formed, and formed at once. The matter was then remitted to the Central Conference Committee, with instructions to prepare a scheme; and Mr Aspinall was requested by that Committee, as a member of the Committee, to prepare a scheme, which he did. A Special Conference was to be held on the 23rd inst., in London, to consider this scheme, and discuss proposals for the formation of the association. An amendment had been sent in by a gentleman in the north, Mr Cropper, to the effect that this scheme should be delayed, and that the matter should be postponed for a time. That appeared to be reducing the matter to an absurdity—(hear, hear)—because the Central Conference almost unanimously decided that an association must be formed. Really the matter now to be considered was the details of the scheme, and not its general principles. The Executive Committee, therefore, thought that the Yorkshire Conference, having had the honour of beginning this scheme, should pass some resolution calling upon the Special Conference on the 23rd to carry this scheme through, either as propounded or as amended at the meeting. With regard to the resolution passed on the Poor Law Officers' Superannuation Act, calling on the Local Government Board to provide that officers' contributions should be paid into a special fund, and not into the common fund of the Union, he had received the usual reply, merely acknowledging receipt. The Clerk to the Guardians at Beverley had got the last Conference to pass a most useful resolution, to the effect that the Local Government Board should initiate legislation to provide for service of contributions orders by Guardians on overseers by post, as was provided under the Public Health Act. The usual reply had been received, and nothing had been done so far as he knew, although a general Poor Law Act had been passed this year in which it might have been incorporated. If the association of Poor Law Unions had been formed, they might have pressed this useful measure with due effect upon the Government.

Mr J. BROWN (Dewsbury) did not apprehend that there would be any discussion on the resolution which he had to move. As had been reported to them by the Secretary, the proposal for a Poor Law Unions Association was unanimously adopted by the last Conference

in Yorkshire. In consequence of that resolution, a scheme had been prepared at a very considerable expenditure of time and trouble. There now seemed to be a need for a step to be taken in defence of their own child. Not only did they suggest the formation of an association, but a representative of that Conference prepared a scheme, and that scheme had substantially been adopted in London after three sittings of the Committee. He therefore moved: "That this Conference heartily approves of the principle of the scheme prepared by the Committee of the Central Poor Law Conference for the establishment of an Association of Poor Law Unions, and urges upon the special meeting of the Central Conference to give immediate effect thereto; and this Conference strongly deprecates the proposed amendment by Mr Cropper, and is of opinion that the amendment is out of order, and ought not to be entertained at that Conference."

Mr J. W. TILLOTSON (Halifax) seconded the motion, which was formally adopted.

Mr JAMES WILSON (one of the Guardians of the Leeds Union) then read a paper entitled "Boarding-out of Children, and its Operation in Leeds."

THE BOARDING-OUT SYSTEM AND ITS OPERATION IN THE LEEDS UNION.

BY MR JAMES WILSON,

Chairman of Boarding-out and Emigration Committee, Leeds Union.

To the superficial observer who sees only from the outside, and hears the propounding of theories and the arguments adduced in favour of one or other scheme for the welfare of the poor in the various forms adopted in the administration of the Poor Law, the question arises, Why should there be all these conferences and discussions? But to those who know the inner working of the very complex organisation connected with Poor Law, and take a deep and earnest interest in the subject, all efforts to attain the best ideal and the most practical modes of operation are valuable and important when we consider that about one quarter of a million children under the care of 19,000 Guardians, with all the staff, buildings, and equipment required for such a large number of children, is the charge committed to them; and further, that there are constant changes taking place in

Imperial legislation, and in regard to the children's food, education, training, dress, and the innumerable details which must be dealt with, the need for these annual meetings is apparent.

The meeting of representatives of different Unions, the comparing of different modes of working, and the giving of information to new Guardians, which may prevent them from entering on schemes theoretically very plausible, but which have been proved to be unworkable and costly, is of great value and interest in preventing mistakes and promoting wise legislation.

In venturing to occupy the time of this important Conference of the Guardians of the Unions of Yorkshire, I am actuated by the desire to be as practical as possible in the observations I may make on the subject of boarding-out and its operation in Leeds.

Boarding-out is a comparatively recent mode of dealing with the children who come under the care of Boards of Guardians. They were originally occupants of the Workhouse, and as they became old enough, were apprenticed out to different tradesmen, a system often fraught with much cruelty and hardship.

This system had its origin in the time of Elizabeth, and continued till William the Fourth. It was amended by Act of Parliament in 1844, which abolished compulsory apprenticeship, took away the power from the Overseers, removed the control of the Justices, and substituted Boards of Guardians in their place.

In 1835 a Workhouse order provided for schoolmasters and mistresses for teaching reading and writing. The order of 1847 added arithmetic.

In 1839 the Home Secretary recommended the building of schools and the joining of Unions for the reception and education of children in the Workhouses, and an Act passed in 1844 extended its operation to all Unions.

Four years after the passing of this Act, the Moral and Industrial Schools at Leeds were built. But

generally Guardians found the cost too heavy to incur, and under what may be called the "grouping" Act only three were built in London, and three in the country. There are now six in the metropolis and four in the country.

Grants were made in 1846 of £30,000 to pay teachers, and inspection of schools was commenced and conducted by the officers of the Council of Education, who retained the duty till 1863.

In 1858 a Royal Commission on Education took evidence, and reported in 1861.

In this report they strongly recommended large schools. The conclusions at which they arrived were :—

First, That pauperism is hereditary, and that the children born and bred as members of that class furnish the great mass of the pauper and criminal population.

Second, That the best prospect of a permanent diminution of pauperism and crime is to be found in the proper education of such children.

Third, That district and separate schools give an education to the children contained in them which effectually tends to emancipate them from pauperism.

Fourth, That the Workhouse Schools are generally so managed that the children contained in them learn from infancy to regard the Workhouses as their home, and associate with grown-up paupers whose influence destroys their moral character and prevents the growth of a spirit of independence.

Fifth, That the arrangements of Workhouses are unavoidably such as to make it extremely difficult to procure or to retain competent teachers.

This state of things continued until the attention of the Department was called in 1869 (especially by King's Norton Union) by several Unions to the boarding-out system as a means of dealing with the children.

The first boarding-out order was issued in 1870, and in 1871 thirty-nine boarding-out committees had been formed, with 112 children.

In 1877, owing to children being placed with foster-parents who received the pay really as outdoor relief, there were in the Unions 2,546 boarded-out children. A new order was issued containing the orders now in force, giving power to board out children outside the Unions, and in 1894 there were 1,794 children boarded out outside the Unions, and 3,778 within the Unions—a total of 5,572.

In Leeds we commenced our boarding-out in 1879, under the Boarding-out Act. With this Act I presume you are all familiar. We have felt that with regard to deserted and orphan children the Guardians were powerless, but after deputations and memorials by twenty-four of the Metropolitan Unions, Mr Ritchie introduced and carried a Bill under the title of “The Poor Law Act, 1889,” the first clause of which is most invaluable in special cases. It reads as follows:—“Where a child is maintained by the Guardians of any Union, and was deserted by its parent, the Guardians may at any time resolve that such child shall be under the control of the Guardians until it reaches the age of a boy of sixteen, and of a girl of eighteen years, and thereupon until the child reaches that age all the powers and rights of such parent in respect of that child shall, subject as in this Act mentioned, vest in the Guardians.”

May I give you a case we have just had to deal with—a girl, an orphan, who was in our schools, and was emigrated to Canada, where she remained about six years, and was eventually returned to us as incorrigible (the only one we have had sent back). She had grown into a finely developed girl of sixteen. She was sent out as a servant to a most respectable home in Leeds, but in two or three weeks was returned as utterly unmanageable—threatened to leave, and was

wilfully disobedient. She returned to the schools, and said she would not go to the Workhouse, but would commence an immoral life. Having no power to retain her, we induced her to go to the Friendless Girls' Home. I had a letter from this girl in 1892, and she was then very promising.

Efforts are being made to have the age limit eighteen instead of sixteen in the case of deserted children, the same to apply to orphans, which I trust all Guardians will support. Proposals have been made to transfer the children from Boards of Guardians to the County Councils, under the Education Department, at present in abeyance, but which should be opposed as impracticable and costly, especially as to the "ins and outs." So far as Leeds is concerned, we have comparatively few not of this class.

Having reviewed the condition in which we find ourselves in relation to the existing Poor Law legislation and the Local Government Board Orders under which we are acting, I will now give you some account of the Poor Law administration in Leeds in relation to boarding-out.

First, Allow me to say Leeds is a city which has made remarkable progress during the last half-century. In 1826 the Workhouse was at the top of Lady Lane, and had in it all the paupers, both adults and children. There were then no Guardians (the General Order placing Workhouses under Guardians not being issued till 24th July 1847). There were eleven Overseers, the list of whose names was the only information in the public directory on Poor Law matters. The population at this time was 88,746 ; it is now about 410,000. Our Workhouse population is not increasing. Its average for the last ten years has been 409, and this year it has been down to 404.

When our schools were built they were designated Moral and Industrial Schools, and we had a chaplain who watched over their moral and religious welfare,

and also industrial trainers—tailor, shoemaker, and seamstress. But the Board decided that these were of so expensive a character that as the trainers became incapable others were not appointed in their place. The industrial training had become a mere farce.

The children now spend most of their time in play after school hours. Our schools used to have in them nearly 200 children; now we have practically only the ins-and-outs, orphans, and deserted by father, the mother outside. All attend the elementary Board Schools, and have done so for fifteen years.

The addition to Union buildings during the last twenty-five years has been an infirmary, which is full of almost exclusively senile cases. We are gradually absorbing our school buildings into the infirmary. I may say we have built a Nurses' Home at a cost of £10,000, and are about building imbecile wards to cost about £15,000.

The battle which has been waged between the Barrack Schools, the Cottage Homes, and the boarding-out system seems, especially since the issuing of the Report of the Poor Law Schools Committee, to have settled into one between boarding-out and Cottage Homes, and each method has its able defenders.

The Barrack Schools had a great advantage in being in possession of the field, there being many schools on which large sums of money had been expended, and it was natural that the children should be kept to furnish them. But no such schools have been built for the last twenty-seven years, and it may be considered certain the Local Government Board would not agree to such erections again. With regard to Cottage Homes, in some Unions large sums of money have been expended. For instance, the Birmingham Board spent £45,000 on the Marston Green Cottage Homes; Sheffield, £21,303—the former costing about £7,000 per annum, and the latter nearly £4,500, to

which the rents and interest added make the cost £5,783 per annum.

Dewsbury has had Homes for some years, and our neighbouring Union at Hunslet is now erecting them. Guardians having these Homes have something to show, and they with pride point to their houses and organisation.

The advocates of the boarding-out system having sent their children out into the world of ordinary life, they only can point to a boy or girl sitting with the other children in an ordinary Board School, dressed like the other children, passing through the same curriculum of study, having no taint upon them, feeling their own individuality, cut off from props and pauperism, and acting for themselves and by themselves, are qualifying for life's duties and service. They generally do well. One of our boys last year took a scholarship at the higher grade school.

The mistress of the Beckett Street Board School says : " As far as my department is concerned, I find your girls quite as well conducted as any of our children, and very much better than many."

The headmaster of the Beckett Street School says : " I can report very favourably of your boys. Their conduct and behaviour are very good. Their intelligence is not quite up to our average boys, and they are rougher and noisier in the playground, but they are obedient and painstaking, and their progress merits a very favourable recognition."

The master of St Charles' Roman Catholic School states : " On the whole, the boys from the Industrial School are among the best of my pupils, being respectful, earnest in their work, and obedient to their teachers." The mistress says : " I have much pleasure in forwarding you the required report on the conduct of the Union children attending this school. The girls are generally well behaved and obedient

and diligent, and give satisfaction to their respective teachers."

From Miss Whiting of the Headingley Orphans' Home: "With regard to your question about our orphan children, we have had 88 from the Leeds Union—28 boys, 60 girls. Some have done exceedingly well in the world, and none have turned out failures. We have had no complaints about them from the Board School; they are well spoken of in every respect."

Our boast is that we have no residuum. We get the children away; we place them in the outside world, even if they are infants; and few—there are some, but very few—return to the Workhouse. They are absorbed in the great body of the people. In our Workhouse we have now only four who have been in the schools—two feeble-minded, and two boys who, having lost their employment, have come in for temporary shelter.

During the past five years three girls have come from service, all feeble-minded. Two have been returned from Otley. With the boy our master has no fault but his being full of mischief; and the girl has a peculiar-shaped head, which is no fault of hers. And one boy came back from the training ship, to which he could not adapt himself, but he is now a fine fellow in the army.

The question of how best to deal with the children in the Poor Law Schools is one pressing heavily on the minds of all Guardians of the poor and all others interested in the welfare of the young. It is especially interesting to the Leeds Board of Guardians, who have had a committee appointed at the request of a few new members to consider whether some building should be rented or bought, or whether an extensive site should be purchased and large schools erected for the accommodation of the children, arising from our need of the present schools for infirmary purposes. It had further

been decided to visit the Swinton Schools (containing some 700 children), which are looked upon as a model institution worthy of imitation.

These proposals have been advocated by gentlemen feeling the importance of having the children removed from the immediate vicinity of the Workhouse, taken away into the country, provided with a building of modern construction, and fitted with all appliances adapted to such an institution, surrounded by broad acres, and removed entirely from touch with pauper surroundings.

The instructions to this committee included the consideration of an alternative scheme of building Cottage Homes for the children, so that twelve to fifteen might be placed under the care of foster-parents who should make them a home and train them to habits of domestic and industrial life. This committee returned from their visits, not to the Swinton Schools, but to several Cottage Homes, fully convinced that to build large schools would be a mistake, that Cottage Homes were really on their trial, and that our present mode gave the most satisfactory results.

For eighteen years we have worked the boarding-out method with success, but some few years since the Guardians who had introduced it were succeeded by others who entertained the idea that to pay a fixed sum down and send the children out of the country was the most economical, and avoided the trouble and oversight necessary to the boarding-out system. This, in turn, has given place to the original ideas, and boarding-out has again become popular.

We have many applications from respectable homes in the Union, and arrangements have been made by the kindness of Mrs Fawkes, of Farnley Hall, to send into the Otley district a number of children who will be under the supervision of a committee with that lady at its head. The Board has also availed itself of the

Orphan Homes under the care of the late respected Mrs Whiting, where thirty children are well cared for whose parent or parents are dead or have deserted their children. Several of these children have gone direct to the Home without going into the Workhouse Schools at all. The same may be said of the St Chad's Home for waifs and strays, where the girls are taught knitting by machine and laundry work. As to the Roman Catholic children, the girls are regularly transferred to the St Mary's Orphanage, except when they are too young, when they may be boarded out to Roman Catholic parents. With regard to the boys, we have difficulty in finding suitable homes, and have emigrated several.

The bulk of our children are in the school buildings under the care of Mr and Mrs Stancliff. There are 56 boys and 31 girls; 12 are orphans, 15 deserted, and 24 illegitimate or father in prison or deserted by father, and mother dead; the remaining 36 are ins-and-outs. During the last ten years we have adopted 51 children. These have been disposed of in the following manner:—

Boys	8	to “Indefatigable.”
„	3	emigrated to Canada.
„	9	boarded out at Otley.
„	1	„ „ „ Leeds.
„	1	claimed by friends.
„	2	imbecile.
„	1	dead.
„	8	still in schools.
Girls	4	boarded out at Otley.
„	4	„ „ „ Leeds.
„	7	St Mary's Orphanage.
„	1	adopted.
„	1	St Chad's Home.
„	1	Workhouse.

51 16 of these are Roman Catholics.

Of the eight boys in the school, some are too young

to send out, and others too old to board out. The remaining thirty-six are ins-and-outs; they may be taken out by their parents at a day's notice.

The children in the schools, which are to them simply a home for the time being, cared for by the Master and Matron, who attend to their classification, food, clothing, cleanliness, and good behaviour. These children are not dressed as paupers; they attend the Board Schools or Roman Catholic Schools, and seem to be fairly clear of those evils which characterise the Barrack School.

The health of the children is good; there has been no epidemic of cutaneous or ophthalmic disease for some years. The order is good; cases of corporal punishment are rare. There is a brass band under a competent master.

With regard to the girls, the great difficulty has been their lack of knowledge of domestic duties; but we hope to remedy this by the help of the Leeds Friendless Girls' Society and the Yorkshire Ladies' Council of Education, who already have given two of our girls a term of lessons in cooking, waiting, laundry, &c., and who have taken their first situations, and are doing well.

Having thus reviewed the policy of the Board, it may be advisable to look back on the past history of these schools.

They were built in 1848, and were conducted on what is called the "barrack system." The place was the children's home, school, workshop, and playground—all was conducted mechanically. They rose at a given hour, washed, dressed, worked, fed, were schooled, punished, invalided (always a batch in the school infirmary), were dressed like paupers, looked like paupers, spoke like paupers, felt they were paupers.

As Dr Littlejohn, the Medical Officer of the Hanwell School, said: "The tendency of large schools is

to make the children morose, sullen, and obstinate." Our experience fully corroborated this opinion.

The barrack system did its work with us effectually, and reached its crisis when we had a master whose lieutenant among the girls was the notorious "Gillespie." The *Daily Chronicle* said, 3rd April 1896: "The cruelties practised by 'Nurse Gillespie,' who was in charge of the infants at Brentwood Schools, were such that the woman was sentenced by Mr Justice Day to five years' penal servitude for atrocious cruelties which had gone on for years."

At this time the grossest cruelties were practised. Children were stripped, laid across desks, held by the boys, and flogged unmercifully. Every fortnight some thirty to forty cases were reported, which, rousing the indignation of the more humane members of the Board, led to constant scenes and disputes at the Board meetings.

A strap specially marked with the Chairman's name was the authorised instrument of torture; and when they ran away to escape the cruelty, they were sent to prison for stealing their clothes. But this was not the only cruelty. The boys in the winter time were found with their hands chapped and inflamed from scrubbing the floors under unfair conditions. Along with a late Guardian, Chairman of the Boarding-out Committee, I have seen eighty children standing naked on the stone floor waiting for the bath.

Numbers suffered from ophthalmia, which, as the *Spectator* of 11th April 1896 says: "The schools, for example, are ravaged by ophthalmia, a disease from which the better classes are entirely free; as also, be it remarked, are these very pauper children when they are boarded out." We have none in the schools at the present time.

This is a tolerably fair picture of how things were in the schools sixteen to eighteen years ago, but we forestalled the recommendations of the Poor Law

Schools Committee, and remodelled them on a more satisfactory basis. The compliment paid to Leeds by Mr Wilson, of the Sheffield Board, before the Poor Law Schools Committee, as to his visit to Leeds to see our boarding-out work in 1883, was very generous.

As to our emigration work, we have about thirty children, mostly in the district of Ontario, Canada. The children are regularly visited and reported on by the agents through whom they have been sent. These reports are carefully examined by the committee. We also have private letters from the children, which are very interesting. They are, with perhaps two exceptions, all doing well; and indeed it is reasonable they should. They are our strongest children, who must be clear of all physical defects, be certified by our medical officer and that of the agents as in good sound health of mind and body; and although there may be less cost in emigrating children than in boarding them out, there is the fact that in one case we have the boy or girl ready to become an industrial worker, in the other we lose all connection; and it seems very anomalous that we should pay to send out our strongest, healthiest English children, and open the doors to large numbers of aliens who come to this country and take their places.

The references to emigration in the Poor Law Schools Report are somewhat meagre and of an explanatory character, but there is no strong opinion on the question to be found in their recommendations. They do, however, say: "The testimony from our witnesses is emphatically in favour of the boarding-out of pauper children as the best system, one which secures to them the healthiest and most natural life, and gives them the best chance of escaping pauper associations and becoming absorbed into the respectable working population."

Mr J. R. Mozley, H.M. Inspector of Workhous

Schools, says, in his Report, published in 1888: "On the whole, I think the dangers of the boarding-out system are not great where carefully managed; and also that it has in a considerable number of cases this happy result, in which no other system can rival it, that the children obtain through it personal friends who take an interest in their welfare."

Dr Barnardo, who had tried first the barrack institution and then the village home, adopted boarding-out as superior to either of them. He would not create another large institution in any circumstances; and he says that although he has had many opportunities for adding to his institutions, he has declined to do so, "because boarding-out is so much better."

Miss Mason, the recently appointed inspector, says: "Boarding-out is, according to my experience, if well carried out, the best of systems, and if badly, the worst."

The final conclusion of the Poor Law Schools Committee is—

11. "That the boarding-out system be extended."

12. "That the establishment of small certified homes be encouraged."

13. "That the emigration of suitable children be extended."

In Leeds we have for many years availed ourselves of all these recommendations of the committee. But after an experience of about eighteen years, we consider that an efficient, carefully supervised system of boarding-out is the best adapted to meet our present requirements, and work out, root and branch, the evils of pauperism we all so much deplore.

The present small number of children for whom the Leeds Guardians are responsible in the Leeds Union Schools in comparison with many other Unions is perhaps the best possible proof of the wisdom of the

policy they have so long pursued. We have at present 87 children all told in the schools. They consist of—

	Under Six.	Under Ten.	Over Ten.	Over Fourteen.	Total.
Boys . . .	9	40	6	1}	87
Girls . . .	5	13	12	1}	
	—	—	—	—	
	14	53	18	2	

The two over fourteen are receiving industrial training. Thirty-six of these are “ins and outs” whose parent or parents are in the Workhouse. Having only one boy and one girl over fourteen who are available for industrial training, the idea of appointed trainers is simply absurd. It must be noted that many children have to remain one year before we can deal with them outside the schools. Now, what is the state of things in those Unions where large schools have been built.

In the separate schools connected with the twelve parishes managed by the respective Boards of Guardians in London there are 4,721 children, and the average population of each Union is 151,245, with an average of 393 children to each Union. The population of the Leeds Union is 223,000, with 87 children in the schools, and about 20 in the Workhouse infirmary, of school age. In the London District Schools the numbers are much higher. In Birmingham, although having 408 children in the Marston Green Homes, they have a larger number of ins-and-outs than we have in Leeds.

The cost in these schools ranges from 8s. 1d. to nearly 10s. per head per week, while our cost in boarding-out is regulated at not more than 4s., with some slight additions for clothing and doctor's fees.

The boarding-out officer, who does not devote all his time to the work, visits and reports once a month (not at fixed times) all the children in the homes. The medical officers and the school teachers also report

quarterly, and members of the committee residing in the locality where the children live have a quiet regard and observance of them. I have personally visited their homes and found them satisfactory, the children happy and contented.

Most of the children take the name of the foster-parents, and are looked upon as their own. One of the foster-mothers, on being asked had she one of our children, took exception to the word "our," and said they did not like anybody to speak of her as "our's" except themselves. They are all required to attend the elementary schools, a Sunday-school, and a place of religious worship.

DISCUSSION.

The discussion was opened by

Mr R. S. PICKERING (Kingston-upon-Hull), who said there was a time when he was much enamoured of the cottage home system, but he had always detested most extremely the idea of a barrack school. In Hull they had had the boarding-out system for twelve years. It had been an unqualified success in that Union; though there were drawbacks which would be manifest to those who gave that system a trial. In cottage homes, where you had twelve, fifteen, or eighteen children together under the care of foster-parents, it was, he maintained, quite possible for the scandal of Nurse Gillespie to be repeated on a smaller scale. He was sure that if Guardians went in for boarding-out, and got a committee of ladies to watch over and visit the children, it would be found an immense advantage. The children in his Union all attended the public elementary schools. In one case a girl won a scholarship to a higher grade school; and in another, a boy got an important post in a large engineering work, and the committee were so pleased that they gave that boy a £5 set of mathematical instruments. (Hear, hear.)

Mr JAMES HINDELL (Knaresborough) said he was astonished to hear Mr Wilson wandering so wide of the subject, although he seemed to have got to it in the end. (Laughter.) There were a great many children in the Workhouses who could not be boarded out. What was to be done with them? Were they to keep them in the Workhouse, or ought they not to provide cottage homes? Mr Wilson told them that even Leeds sent out thirty children to Mrs Whiting's Home at Headingley, which was a good thing to do. He (the speaker) had visited the children's homes at Dewsbury, and they seemed to him as perfect as cottage homes could be. They were just outside the Workhouse, and were served from it under the eye of the master

and matron. His position was that they should board out those who could be boarded out, and they should have proper cottage homes for the others whom they could not board out ; and when Guardians decided to board out any of the children, let them board out those children in good families. If they could not get good families, let them adopt the cottage home system. (Hear, hear.)

Mr T. A. GUY (Bradford) said there was great danger in adopting only one system in dealing with children, circumstances and individuals varied to such an extent. He was very sorry to see that there seemed to be a controversy between cottage homes and boarding-out. (Hear, hear.) He believed that the true system was to adopt both systems—(hear, hear)—and that they ought not to set one against the other. He supposed that the idea of boarding-out the children was to bring them up under the conditions that children in a decent working-class home were brought up. Boarding-out might give a training of that character. He thought that Mr Wilson had overlooked the fact that there was an immense number of children whom they could not possibly deal with by boarding-out. He wanted to know what proportion of children in the Leeds Union were dealt with by the system of boarding-out ; that had not been given to them. They had been told that the Leeds Guardians had in their Union at the present time only ninety-three children. It had been contended that the boarding-out system had brought about the low number of children in the charge of the Guardians of the Leeds Union. He did not think that the number they had to deal with in Bradford, which had a larger population than the Leeds Union, would exceed the number dealt with by Leeds. Bradford had established five homes in different localities, and had refused to put more than eight children into a home, for if they had a larger number than eight they were destroying the very thing which they were seeking to establish. The cost of these homes, he believed, would compare very favourably with that of barrack schools, and would come nearer to the economy of boarding-out than any other system they could find. They did not ignore the boarding-out system—they valued it ; but it was impossible to board out all the children. He hoped that Guardians would not fight a battle between boarding-out or cottage homes, but he must deprecate the idea of putting homes out in the country, as had been done by Leicester and some other large Unions, inasmuch as it was their duty to bring up the children in contact with the people with whom they would have to live afterwards. (Hear, hear.)

Mr STUTTARD (Huddersfield) said that he was both pleased and disappointed with Mr Wilson's paper. It was suggestive, but at the same time it did not give the Conference the information that he felt they were fairly entitled to. (Hear, hear.) He had expected to have some details as to the boarding-out system in Leeds. Some twelve years ago he had the honour to be one of a committee sent to inspect the homes of children boarded out by the Leeds Guardians, and he

believed that it was their report that largely influenced the Huddersfield Guardians in adopting the same system. What he saw was to his mind satisfactory, for they found the children well cared for, and happy and comfortable. At Huddersfield they had about thirty children boarded out, in good homes, and happy and contented. Those children were well reported on at the various schools they attended, and the schoolmasters had in some cases sent exceedingly interesting and satisfactory reports as to the progress of the pupils. A great deal depended on the committee. It was essential that the children should be well visited, and that the Standing Orders of the Local Government Board in that respect should be strictly complied with. If the reports of the committee were regularly rendered—he was sorry to say that at Huddersfield that had not always been the case, but they were trying to mend their ways—then boarding-out would become an interesting as well as a successful system. To his mind boarding-out was one of the best amongst the many means provided of dealing with Workhouse children. Would that many more children could be boarded out. (Hear, hear.) But there were cases where the parents were inmates of the Unions, or where there were undesirable relatives and influences outside which made it impossible for the Guardians to board out some children.

Mr T. WORDSWORTH (Wakefield) said that the fundamental thought in his mind was that they had these children thrown upon their hands through no fault of the children's own, and their duty was to do the best that they could for these children, and bring them up as honest and useful members of society. Six or seven years ago he was strongly opposed to boarding-out. They used to send out children and lost sight of them entirely, save that the Relieving Officer, when he felt disposed, visited them. But now they had a Boarding-out Committee composed principally of ladies, and had twenty-seven children boarded out who were doing admirably. They were particular not to let the children go to people who wanted them merely for the money that was paid for their keep. He was a convert to boarding-out, and was in favour of cottage homes for those whom they could not board out. As far as the metropolis was concerned, he believed that barrack schools were very useful, but in the provinces they were opposed to them. Get the children away from the Workhouses and from contact with the adult paupers. He regretted that he could not get the whole of the Guardians to favour the formation of cottage homes.

Mr HORSFALL (Knaresborough) said that he was a member of the Boarding-out Committee of his Union. The main thing they must look at was pounds, shillings, and pence, as well as at "expediency." (A laugh.) They had an argument for the adoption of the boarding-out system because it was economical. In adopting the boarding-out system they would save the cost of cottage homes, and it might be argued that the children would be as well in the Workhouse as in these homes. (No.) The cottage homes were only one

degree removed from the Workhouse. (Dissent.) They had had motions at his Board in favour of forming cottage homes, but he was glad to say that his Board had refused to have the cottage home system on account of the unnecessary expenditure entailed. It meant increase of staff by having foster-mothers and so on, all of which, under the Superannuation Act, simply meant more pensions eventually. Did they want to do that when it might be avoided? They ought to take those things in a very broad light. (Derisive laughter.)

Mrs LAYFIELD (Sculcoates) said she had sat on a Board which had been boarding out children for the last three years, and had found it an admirable plan. They had sixty-five children boarded out, and seventy-two in the House whom they could not board out, and they were about to open their first cottage home. If only they managed to turn out good servants from their cottage homes, they would have gained their ends. Her experience was, that they seldom had a girl from the Workhouse who could keep a situation. They did not know the name of common things; and what wonder, when it was remembered that they were brought up in a large establishment where everything was done on a large scale. When they entered a small house, they did not know where they were. As to the number of children in a home, she did not think that twelve was too many. Were there not many well-managed homes with twelve children in them? Perhaps some of those present at that Conference had twelve or more in family. (Laughter.) The test of a system was, whether it enabled them to turn out good citizens. (Hear, hear.)

Mr J. FARRELL (Kingston-upon-Hull) said he supposed that their first consideration was, What would be the best thing for the children? The great advantage of the boarding-out system was, that children got assimilated with the people around them, and became absorbed in the general population. They could not expect any paid officer they put over the children to have the same motherly and fatherly consideration for them that foster-parents would have for them in the case of boarding-out in separate homes. All the children in Hull that were capable of being boarded out were so disposed of, and they found the system successful. At first they found a difficulty in getting homes for them, but now there were plenty of applicants waiting for the possibility of getting a child. His experience was decidedly in favour of boarding out, and he hoped that if any delegates had not adopted the system, they would do so as soon as possible. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs PICKARD (Knaresborough) said she felt that neither cottage homes nor boarding-out could be a success unless the children were properly and regularly visited. Every boarded-out child in her Union was visited at least once a month; and girls who had gone into domestic service were also visited, and their wardrobes were overhauled, so that by the time they were sixteen they were launched fairly able to take care of themselves. There ought to be

no controversy between boarding-out and cottage homes — they were both good systems ; and if any Guardian there wished to see for himself how well the latter system worked, she would advise him to visit Dewsbury. The children who could not be boarded out ought to be kept in cottage homes, which should always be quite separate from the Workhouse, and to be under the direct supervision of the Boarding-out Committee.

Rev. T. A. A. HUGHES (Halifax) was glad to say that the Union with which he was connected about two years ago committed itself to the adoption of cottage homes, but had unfortunately left the matter in abeyance. They had on their shoulders £130,000 to pay for their Workhouse and New Infirmary, but he hoped that in the course of a few years they would have cottage homes. He agreed that there was plenty of room both for cottage homes and for boarding-out. He remembered recently visiting a house and hearing the housewife say that her husband had been out of work for weeks, and she did not know what they would have done if it had not been for Jimmy and his half-crown a week — “Jimmy” being a little boarded-out boy. That was not the sort of place to send the children to. (Hear, hear.) They had in his own Union one of the best honorary secretaries that could possibly be imagined. The great point was to have a good committee, and then boarding-out would be found a very good system. He would like to ask Mr Wilson one question. In his district people only wanted the girls ; they did not care to have anything to do with the boys. What were they to do with the boys ? He also wished to ask how Leeds managed to get reports of the children who were emigrated. The Halifax Union had emigrated several, but the children might as well have been thrown into the Atlantic for all that was known of them afterwards. He had been asked to write to these children, and had done so, but had only got replies from three. All the rest seemed to be swallowed up out there. If he could find out who the agents were who looked after the children and were responsible for periodical reports to the Union, he would be very thankful. There was the question of medical attendance on boarded-out children. They had ceased to ask their Union medical officers to look after them, for they could scarcely expect them to do so. Yet if they gave *carte blanche* to an ordinary local practitioner, they might have a very heavy bill sent in now and then. He would be very glad if Mr Wilson would say how they were managing in Leeds.

Mr J. H. BENTHAM (Bradford) said that how to deal with the children who were not boarded out was the problem. He thought there would be no difference of opinion with reference to the advisability of having cottage homes scattered homes, instead of on the colony system. Sheffield had taken the lead in the institution of scattered homes, and their idea had been to get the children away from all connection with pauperism. To build a lot of cottage homes near your Workhouse, was only taking the children from one building and

putting them into another at a large expenditure of money. If they put them in a colony about eight or nine miles from the Workhouse, it was only building a little Workhouse for the children. In Bradford they had rented houses suitable for eight children and the foster-mother, and paid £25 a year to the foster-mother, who did everything (washing, mending, baking, and so forth) inside the house with the help of the children. In regard to the "in-and out" children, they had sufficient to warrant them in providing a separate home for that class.

Mr WILLIAM SMITH (Dewsbury) said he was very much obliged to the speakers who had said congratulatory things about the Dewsbury Homes; but he objected to the remark that the Dewsbury Homes, being near the Workhouse, gave the children the pauper taint, and that they might just as well be in the Workhouse itself. The children went to school the same as ordinary children, and they were clothed the same as ordinary children. When they reached the age of eleven or twelve, they were taught domestic duties; and there was no difficulty in getting them out into the world. He believed that they had more applications for children than they were able to meet. They had a committee of ladies who visited these children after they went out, and that system had worked in an admirable manner.

Mr CUNLIFFE (Kingston-upon Hull) said they were told that boarding-out had been an unqualified success, but it did not reach every class of child in the Workhouse. Cottage homes might be desirable, but they were far too costly. They had been told that the cost of a child was probably 10s. a week. That was an enormous sum when they compared it with the amount they gave to widows, some of whom had several children to keep. He did not wish to decry for a moment what had been done by their neighbours in Sculcoates, but his Board were not in favour of the erection of cottage homes, on the ground of their great expense both in building and working. He did not feel that it would be justifiable to put the ratepayers to an enormous expense simply to provide for the "ins-and-outs."

The PRESIDENT suggested that the discussion should close, whereupon

Rev. A. J. DAVIES (Huddersfield) said he wished to enter a protest against what appeared to him to have been an unpardonable waste of time. Several of the speakers had discussed the cottage home system *versus* boarding-out. That was not the subject. Guardians could not deal with all the children by boarding them out. The cottage homes were a supplemental method, and ought to be discussed apart. (Hear, hear.)

Mr WILSON said he did not know that there was much that called for a reply. He regretted that he could not give Mr Hindell the capacity to understand that it was necessary for the orderly development of the theme that he should deal with it as he had done. He neither said nor thought that the boarding-out system should be exclusively used. What he said was that they had adopted both the

boarding-out and the cottage home system, and also emigration. He had been to see the Dewsbury Homes. Whilst he was there, a pauper came in from the Workhouse to make some inquiries about his boy, and to leave a little money for the child. In fact, it seemed to him that the Dewsbury homes were as much a part of the Workhouse as the Workhouse itself. He looked upon the Dewsbury Homes, though in themselves excellently arranged, as the most unfortunate mistake that had ever been made in regard to cottage homes. (Applause.) At Hunslet they had fourteen children in a home; at Bradford only eight. They all knew as sensible men that fourteen children were too many for any woman to manage day and night. (Applause.) In such a home there might be a general love for children, but there could not be a particular love, such as a foster-parent of a boarded-out child could feel, and the children did not have the same chance of assimilation with the community. They had the same difficulty with the boys that Mr Hughes had mentioned, especially with Roman Catholic boys. With regard to visitations, they had a different idea from that which had been expressed by the representatives of many Unions. They felt in Leeds that the less visitation there was the better. It had been said that even the servants who had gone out, and who were beyond the legal reach of the Guardians, should be visited. He did not believe in such visiting, although they might get to know privately how the children were getting on. These young women of sixteen, seventeen, or eighteen did not wish a visitor to call and let the mistress know that they were Poorhouse children, who had to be visited and looked after. The Guardians wanted to throw them upon their own resources and upon their own responsibility. The ordinary visitor might go in as unobtrusive a way as possible, but the less of ladies and the less of committees the better. (Hear, hear.)

Miss GIBSON then read the following paper:—

THE NURSING OF SICK IN WORKHOUSES.

By MISS GIBSON,

Matron of the Birmingham Workhouse Infirmary.

To those who are interested in, and have observed the course of growth of, Poor Law nursing, nothing I think can be more striking and more encouraging than the change which has taken place in this department of work during the last few years. It is more than thirty years since Mr William Rathbone intro-

duced, at his own expense, as an experiment, a system of trained nursing in the Liverpool Workhouse. His system proved eminently successful, and the Liverpool Vestry, after a very short time, took the nursing into its own hands, and carried it on on the same lines in which it had been inaugurated. But even after this hopeful start had been made, other Unions were very slow to follow so wise an example ; and, except in one or two of the large Unions, Workhouse nursing remained largely in the hands of untrained women, or of those nurses who for some reason had not been successful in other branches of their profession. In 1885, twelve years ago, the Scotch Board of Supervision issued a minute on the subject of "Trained Sick Nursing in Poorhouses" (the Scotch equivalent of Workhouses). By this minute it was decided that in every Poorhouse, where the daily average of sick amounted to twenty, there should be one trained nurse, and that up to sixty this proportion should be maintained. That is, that for sixty sick persons, three trained nurses should be employed. But after this excellent and wise regulation comes the following somewhat remarkable one : "In every Poorhouse where the average number of sick exceeds sixty, a trained head-nurse, or lady-superintendent, must be employed, in addition to the number of trained nurses required by the foregoing rule." This, too, would be excellent were it not followed by this proviso : "but the proportion of trained nurses to the sick, above sixty, may be as one in thirty." One wonders where the unfortunate trained nurses who can even keep clean and tidy, to put nursing out of the question, thirty patients, are to be found. I may here add that many of the Scotch Poorhouses are admirably and sufficiently nursed, and I only quote this order as a proof of the slowness with which nursing work and nursing needs have been discovered and remedied, and to show what was considered sufficient so lately as twelve years ago. Before leaving Scotland, I may

perhaps mention that by the Board of Supervision there a trained nurse is required to have had "not less than two years in a public hospital, being a training school for nurses and maintaining a resident physician or surgeon."

In 1895, the Local Government Board issued a circular letter which contained recommendations of a most useful and practical nature, both for the sick and the nurses; and so quickly has public opinion moved of late, that in September 1897 every Board of Guardians, by order of the Local Government Board, finds itself compelled to dispense with pauper nursing except under medical supervision, and to provide at all events some trained and efficient help for their sick poor. To those of us who have spent years in trying to render the nursing of our most helpless fellow-creatures more skilled, and therefore more tender, this order is a most refreshing and helpful sign, for though there may be, as there always are, details which we might (and do) individually desire to change, its tendency is all in the right direction; and where the initial difficulties which attend the inauguration of anything new in a large organisation have been cleared away, and we see more clearly which are real and which are imaginary stumbling-blocks, I think we shall be able to agree that the changes which it necessitates make mostly for righteousness. I must not be supposed to be a partisan,—I do not hold a brief for the Order,—but I do recognise very gladly its aims, though I plead guilty to feeling that I should dearly have loved to edit it before it became law. I fancy that I am not singular in this feeling, and that had all of us who would have liked to add our own pet theory, and remove our particular dislike, been allowed to do so, the Order would have been received in a very mutilated and unrecognisable condition.

There can, I think, be very little doubt that for a time at least the difficulty of obtaining good superin-

tendent nurses will be very great. Many things go to make this difficult at all times, and now that so many Unions are called upon to supply themselves the difficulty will be accentuated. Of late years the immense and increasing demand for district and private nurses has opened up a field, which attracts and holds many of our best nurses,—they prefer the companionship of other nurses to the officialism of the Poor Law. In private work, to their own undoing, they remain their own mistresses, only responsible to the medical men who attend the case, and probably treated with the greatest respect and deference by anxious friends. In district work, if they are supervised, it is by a fully trained and qualified superintendent or by an inspector. In either they are largely mistresses, too, of their own time; they have certain definite hours, which belong to them, and which they can always take without leave asked or given. In Poor Law work this is very different; they have to ask for ward necessities, which are very likely not given; constant friction is caused by shortness of linen, and complaints from the Workhouse that the washing of the sick wards is extravagant and unnecessary; they lead monotonous and lonely lives; no one takes any notice of their troubles, or tries to make their life more bright. What more natural than that they should lose heart, and feel that there is no use struggling on where they are neither wanted nor appreciated, when so many other ways are open to them?

It always seems to me that this might be easily remedied by the Guardians themselves, and that nurses might be encouraged very easily to stay on and to persevere in the good work they have begun. It has to be remembered that in these days the comfort of the nurses is one of the first considerations in a well-ordered training school. Many of the women who take up Workhouse work come directly from the large infirmaries. There they have had a comfortable

nurses' home ; they have been treated with some consideration ; they have been taught in every possible way to uphold the dignity of nursing, and to maintain their position as superior officials ; they have had their special fixed hours off duty, their comfortable meals, and the bright and cheerful companionship of a number of other young women. This is their idea, naturally (for it is all they know) of Workhouse nursing. From this, their training school, which they usually admire and love, they go to a country Union, where they have no other nurse ; they find their presence resented ; very often their desire to do their utmost for their patients is looked upon as equivalent to saying that they have come to reform, and they are suspected of posing as superior to their surroundings. All that they have said or done has been said and done quite innocently. They have been taught to nurse the sick, and in these early days they may possibly be a little dictatorial ; but so often a little forbearance at first would right all these difficulties. Most of these nurses are young, and full of enthusiasm, and they have often had very little experience of the world. How can they be expected, under totally new and unknown conditions, to be always absolutely patient and discreet ? I do not wish to be held to be taking altogether the nurses' part. I have known cases where nurses have been overbearing and arbitrary, and where my sympathies have not gone with them in the slightest degree ; but on the whole, I think that in most cases, if the fault is on the nurse's side, it is the outcome of her anxiety for the comfort and benefit of her patient. Surely a somewhat excusable fault !

I would suggest to Guardians that much unnecessary friction between nurses and masters and matrons would be saved, and much more permanence given to the position of nurse in smaller Unions, if they could see their way to providing their superintendent nurse with a full and plentiful supply of linen for all her wards, and letting her send without let or hindrance

what she finds necessary daily to the laundry. The matron, being in charge of all the linen in the house, would of course be required to take the stock of sick ward linen every month, or every three months, as might be arranged, and the nurse would be responsible for its condition and for the correctness of the numbers. If possible, sick ward linen should be sent to the laundry and returned from it daily. I would then suggest that the Guardians themselves should draw up a time-table for the use of the nurses, giving them certain hours daily which are their own, in which they can go out or employ themselves in any way they like without leave from any one ; our nurses in Birmingham have two and a half hours off duty every day, which they take as a matter of course. In country Unions the nurses would probably have to ask the master (who would, when there is no Infirmary matron, be the administrative head) when they want extra time. But such asking would only be occasional. I feel sure that these two points settled by the Guardians themselves would remove a very large proportion of the friction which at present exists. Then I should much like to say, if I may do so without seeming to dictate, that in country Unions where there are Lady Guardians much good may be done by taking the nurses out for an afternoon. This is sometimes looked upon suspiciously by other, and especially by head, officials. I have never found it lead to any evil. Nice-minded nurses do not discuss their fellow-workers ; and if they did, I feel sure there are very few ladies who would encourage them. I know that all this sounds very small. I have been for many years a receptacle for the grievances of Workhouse nurses, and I know that the greatest of their troubles seem very small to us. But we must remember that the friction is always present, and that troubles and worries are aggravated and exaggerated by a monotonous life ; they are like insects' bites, " we scorn them, but they sting."

I should like, before closing, to say a word in regard to

the number of patients to each nurse. On this question the Local Government Board gives us no information, and the Scotch Order says one nurse to twenty patients, or, if the average is above sixty, one nurse to thirty. It would be interesting to know the reason of this decision! This proportion seems to me absolutely inadequate, and I am glad to believe that the Local Government Board would probably feel this also. I think the very lowest allowable average would be one nurse to fourteen, and this could only be considered sufficient where many of the cases are chronic, and can do a good deal to help themselves. In a town where many of the cases are acute, and many helpless and bed-ridden, the lowest workable average would be one to eight, and this would only suffice where the buildings are modern and convenient. The more the wards are divided into small rooms with only a few beds in each, the greater will be the number of nurses required.

I want before closing just to draw your attention to one or two expressions in the Order which may be a little misleading, and should, I think, be quite clearly understood. In Article I., Clause 22, we are told that "No pauper inmate of the Workhouse shall be employed as an attendant." This, I take it, does not mean that at any time any pauper will be permitted to do any nursing for any patient, but simply that such inmate will be selected by the medical man to wait on the nurse, to carry away soiled linen or dressings, or to clean the wards. "Attendant," as a term, is somewhat misleading. It is usually taken to mean some paid official who has charge of healthy inmates. In this case I imagine it refers to what in a hospital we should call a wardmaid, and of course the reason for putting such helpers in a Workhouse under medical control is obvious, and most helpful to Guardians and officials. Then in Article II., referring to the appointment of assistant nurses, "without having had such practical experience in nursing," I think it would be well to fix

the minimum quantity and quality of this experience, to say at least one year in a large infirmary. This expression occurs again in Article V., and appears to me undesirably vague.

I have left two very important points untouched, because I feel I have already sorely tried the patience of my audience, and they cannot from the nature of them be passed over in a few words. One is the question of assistant nurses, which appears to me surrounded by difficulties which must eventually make themselves apparent.

The other is the desirability of the large infirmaries being used as nurseries to feed the small ones. I hope that I may some time be allowed the privilege of expressing my views, and laying before you the skeleton of a scheme by which the benefits of our large and splendidly equipped Infirmary Training Schools may devolve on those who surely have the first claim on them—the smaller, and especially the country, Workhouses.

Meantime, I feel that at last the importance of infirmary nursing is being recognised more and more; and I rejoice to believe that as its possibilities become known, and it receives a more hearty recognition as a very important branch of an important profession, our difficulties will become fewer, and we shall have a larger share of public favour than has been accorded to us heretofore. To those of us whose work is nearly over this will make no difference, but I do not now conceal from myself how often I have been tempted to give up the nursing I had chosen, and walk in the more fashionable paths of hospital life. I am glad now I had the courage to go on, but I should like to try to gain for the younger nurses the help and sympathy which have been hitherto so largely extended to other branches of the profession, and so meagrely bestowed on our infirmary nurses. No one who has an intimate knowledge of Workhouse nursing can withhold from our

nurses their admiration of their quiet and unselfish labours ; and although I should be the last to desire for them the adulation which has been so fatal to some of their sisters, I cannot but feel strongly that a little judicious appreciation would be extremely grateful, and would often stimulate and encourage them to even greater efforts.

DISCUSSION.

The discussion was opened by

Mr A. F. BEDFORD (Barnsley), who is known as "The Ambulance King." He said that that was one of the proudest moments of his life, for he would be able to tell that Conference something on one of the most important matters on which, as Guardians, they had to deal. He supposed that if any of them were ill that night, they would have the doctors and nurses and friends and relatives around them, and everything in the best possible style. Why could they not give the paupers the benefit of trained nurses by day and night ? and why could not they treat those nurses well when they got them ? He heard some one oppose the idea of uniforms for nurses, and he asked him whether when he (the speaker) called at his house the other day he did not find the servant in a mob-cap and apron. Of course he did. Yes, of course, and he knew then that it was not the mistress. (Laughter.) You must have a distinction. (Hear, hear.) He and all the members of his family had devoted themselves to ambulance work, and he was pleased to state that he had never had a penny piece from it. He would like to know how many Guardians there that day had got a good ambulance for the sick poor. Some men would give the world to be on the Board of Guardians—ask such men to present the Union with an ambulance wagon. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) He heartily thanked Miss Gibson for the paper.

Mrs SHEARD said if there was any one she sympathised it was the Workhouse nurse ; for it was not nice work, and not work that anybody could take to unless they did it for the sake of doing good to others. (Hear, hear.)

Mr E. E. LAWSON (Leeds) said he wished to ask Miss Gibson her idea about the status of the superintendent of nurses. It seemed to him that nurses held a very different position from other Union officials. He had always been an advocate of every power being put into the hands of the superintendent of nurses. It seemed to him that especially where the poor were nursed in a separate institution, that Boards of Guardians had failed to see the difference that occurred in administration. (Hear, hear.) The officials of the infirmaries ought to be placed on a different footing from other

officials. Guardians should recognise that these infirmaries should be governed by the same class of rules that governed an ordinary hospital in regard to administration. (Hear, hear.) Guardians must not seek to exercise the supervision that they exercised over the Workhouse; that was to say, they must get a good master and matron, and a good medical man, and then leave authority in their hands. The less the Guardians interfered the better. He said further, that the engaging and dismissal of nurses should be left in the hands of a capable matron and medical superintendent. Unfortunately they were saddled with the supervision of the Local Government Board, which said that they should not do this or that, and having appointed officers they could not dismiss them. With regard to infirmary nursing, the Local Government Board should recognise that they ought to leave to Guardians a freer hand. (Hear, hear.)

Dr RHODES (Chorlton) said he thoroughly agreed with the last speaker on most points. The class of people whom Guardians now had to deal with was very different from what it was. They no longer had the idle dissolute labourer in great numbers. Their so-called Workhouses were now State hospitals, State almshouses, and State schools. In the Chorlton Workhouse, during the past week, they had only twenty-four described as able-bodied men, although he believed that the Union was the second in size in the country. They employed fifty nurses. Formerly they did not get the best nurses, and they felt that they ought to have the best; so they set to work and trained their own nurses, and now actually supplied voluntary hospitals. That would show that they had trained them well. They had heard a good deal of denunciation of having twenty and thirty children in a cottage home. He thought that if one woman was incompetent to manage twenty or thirty children, how on earth could one woman manage twenty or thirty sick people? They must recognise that they shortened the time the sick people were in hospital by having them properly attended to; and to do that they would have to employ more nurses than one to thirty. Miss Gibson said one to fourteen. He thought that she had put it rather high; his own opinion was one to twelve, and he had had seventeen years' experience. Another point was, that they must make nurses comfortable. There was no mistake about it, nursing pauper cases was much more monotonous than nursing cases in a general hospital, where they had interesting cases. The vast proportion of cases in a Workhouse infirmary were old bronchitis cases, old ulcers of the leg, and so on, which were not very exciting cases. The nurses must be allowed to go out every day. They must go out, or have some enjoyment, and at least they ought to have fresh air. Some time ago, in Chorlton, they had to find some work for certain paupers, and they set them to work to make a tennis-court for the nurses, and the nurses now enjoyed it very much. In regard to hospital superintendents, he held that the superintendent ought to have her

say in matters of linen, and be paramount there. (Cheers.) That should not be left to the ordinary matron, who knew nothing about nursing at all. He knew of a case where certain linen was used for three months and then sent by the superintendent to be washed. It was returned by the matron, with the remark that it was not dirty enough, and should be used for another three months. In that place the nurses had to cook their food in their bedroom, and to keep their food in the paupers' bath-room. It was not a Union in Yorkshire. (Laughter.) Another thing was, that he thought that superintendents ought to be able to give passes to nurses to go out. He did not think that they ought to have to go to the master or matron. He did not think it was wise on the part of Guardians to make nurses scrubbers. Nurses should be kept for nursing. He was certain also that the question of uniform should be regarded as one of importance. What was a policeman without his uniform, or an officer of the army? Uniform promoted *esprit de corps*, and it gave the nurses a sense of their own dignity, and made them feel that they ought to do their best to keep up the dignity of the position. He knew of places where nurses had to sleep three or four in a bedroom. He said every nurse ought to have a bedroom to herself, and the nurses ought to have a comfortable sitting-room, with plenty of easy-chairs in it. Nursing was trying work, and if nurses did their work well they ought to be treated well. (Cheers.) He believed that there was no body of officers who did their duty more honourably than the nurses who looked after the sick poor in our Workhouses. (Cheers.)

Mr J. W. TILLOTSON (Halifax) said that they set Leeds the example in having trained nurses many years ago, and having been Chairman from the beginning, he could appreciate as much as anybody the difficulties underlying the subject so ably treated by Miss Gibson. It was a very awkward thing to bring a trained lady superintendent into a Workhouse, and put her under the control of a master and matron. Friction arose, but he thought that if both sides persevered in trying to cultivate friendly relations with one another that the friction would pass away. He could quite understand that it was not nice for a trained nurse, who was put in a responsible position, to have to be running after many necessaries, such as linen, and what not. He did not think that she ought to be called upon to do it. He thought that a master who took an intelligent view of his position, would be glad for the trained superintendent nurse to take that part of the work off his shoulders. The important thing for Guardians to do was to select the right people to do the work. It was the individual who was going to do the work who would make it a success or not. They should select people of high character, who would take an interest in their work, and whom they could rely upon; then he felt sure that they could get satisfactory results. They ought not to interfere with the management of nurses, but leave it entirely with the superintendents. That had been done in his Union, and with

most satisfactory results. They had been asked to send their nurses to outside cases, and he contended that showed there was a future for Workhouse nursing, and that it could be put upon a very high plane. That was clearly so, when outside institutions came and asked the Guardians to train nurses for them. In Halifax they were going to build a new infirmary, away from the Workhouse. By doing that, they would get people who had a disinclination to enter a Workhouse hospital, because they thought that the same stigma would not rest upon them. They wanted to get people who were destitute people to come in to be cured, and get back to their work again. (Hear, hear.)

Mr A. SHAW (Hunslet) said that three years ago that Board had only three assistant nurses, not a qualified nurse at all. Now they had four nurses, and two of them were certificated—(hear, hear)—and also a much superior man as medical officer. They were also advertising for an outside medical officer, at an advance of £30 on what his predecessor had. The Guardians had also supplied the nurses with two sets of uniforms, and the latter were agitating for, and he was confident that the Guardians would shortly grant, an ambulance. (Cheers.) He was surprised that so many Guardians, for the sake of a paltry halfpenny in the pound, should be set against the comfort of the poor. (Hear, hear.)

Mr G. LISTER (Leeds) said that at the time he joined the Board, nearly seven years ago, they had only about three certified nurses. Now they had eight or nine certified nurses, and perhaps thirty-eight or forty probationers. The question arose, What were they to do with the probationers when they had got their certificates? because they found that there were other Unions who were very glad to get nurses whom they had trained. In Leeds they had a fine nurses' home, and so they got the best stamp of people as probationers. They wanted to keep those nurses on after they had finished their training, and he would like to ask Miss Gibson the best way to do it. At their last meeting the Infirmary Committee decided to make them assistant nurses when they had got their certificates, and advance them from £18 to £25 a year.

Mr G. DERBYSHIRE (Beverley) said that, for the benefit of suffering humanity, it was expedient to have the best of nursing and the best of infirmaries.

Mr C. FITTON (Huddersfield) said that in his own Union they were far short of the standard that Miss Gibson had laid down in her paper, but they were progressing. He thought that there was nothing more important than the nursing of the sick poor, even from the point of view of £ s. d. The better they were nursed, the more quickly they were able to go back to work to earn their own living.

The CHAIRMAN said he would like to compliment Miss Gibson on her paper, and to point out to her that not one of the speakers had criticised the paper adversely. The nurses had in Miss Gibson a very admirable receptacle for their grievances. (Cheers.)

Miss GIBSON (who was cordially cheered) said there were one or two points on which she was afraid she had not succeeded in making herself clearly understood. She was not speaking so much of large and separate infirmaries; she had not in her mind her own position, or that of others who held similar positions,—she was really considering the needs and difficulties of small Workhouses. She quite agreed that in large infirmaries, with large nursing staffs, the matron was the person to deal with leave of absence; but she did not quite see how they could apply that rule to small Unions. She thought that in a small Union, where all the poor were under one administration, there must be one head, and that unless anything exceptional occurred that head must be the nurse. (Hear, hear.) With regard to one or two points in the discussion, she said that if patients could do anything for themselves, one nurse might be able to attend to fourteen patients; but that for acute or bed-ridden patients, there should be one nurse to eight patients. She doubted whether £25 a year would be considered good enough for nurses who had gained a certificate, and had three years' training. At Birmingham there was no difficulty in keeping a nurse, if necessary, after training.

The following paper was then read:—

POOR LAW MEDICAL ECONOMICS.

By THOMAS M. DOLAN, J.P., M.D., F.R.C.S. EDIN.,

Medical Officer, St Luke's Hospital, Halifax.

THE title of my paper will, I hope, be justified when I have read the paper to you. It was suggested that I should write on Poor Law Medical Administration, but the medical officer is only an adviser, and I have always steered clear of attempting to usurp the position which belongs to you, and you will therefore understand that I confine myself still to the same *rôle*, that I simply throw out suggestions or ideas—or shall I say, ideals?—on Poor Law medical requirements, dwelling, too, strongly on general principles which strike me, as a medical man, as applicable to the great problems you have to deal with. I draw, too, on my experience, a ripe one, extending to nearly thirty years in the service.

You all recognise the grave responsibilities and serious duties which fall upon you as Guardians in the

matter of medical relief—duties and responsibilities which are increasing rather than diminishing.

You are discharging in this country duties which in my travels in Germany, France, Austria, Belgium, and Russia I find are undertaken by the municipalities or corporations. You have medical charge of infants and children, you have hospitals for the sick poor suffering from acute diseases, whilst you also make provision for the incurable, the infirm, the dying, for the aged. And you have also lying-in wards, so that your medical field is all-embracing. You have a large staff of medical officers, nurses, as well as other necessary officials, and your expenses are great, so that economics are worth consideration. It is an old electioneering cry, "Economy with Efficiency." Nothing can be truer when applied even to medical relief. For the effective relief of sickness, it appears to me that the only true economy is to provide adequate medical aid. If you accept this principle, as it has been accepted by the Bradford Guardians, by the Leeds Guardians, by the Halifax Guardians, my task will be simpler. It is because you believe that the sick poor for whom you are responsible are entitled to fresh air, good baths, skilled nursing, sufficient and unfettered medical attendance—just as the sick poor have in your noble charities depending on voluntary aid—that you have erected hospitals, built nursing homes, increased your hospital medical staff, and generally increased your first expenditure. Effectual medical aid for grave diseases can only be given under suitable conditions.

How does my paper apply? I will come to the heart of the question. Is it economical to supply trained nurses, give good food, increase the staff of medical men, and generally carry on your hospitals on the most improved principles?

I will try and answer this, briefly dwelling on a few principles of economy in relation to labour and the working classes.

We have in England, as well as in other countries, a large number called the proletariat, viz., those who give to the State only children and their work. Their economic conditions are such that, provided work be found for them, they are able to live, saving something; but if sickness comes on, bringing with it loss of work and the expenses which sickness entails, this class is at once plunged into poverty. Disease does come, owing to the environment and nature of their work. The labourer who works in the open air is liable to pleurisy, pneumonia, bronchitis, rheumatism, heart-strain, and many other diseases, whilst he is also liable to injury and to ulcers of the legs from collision with fragments of stone, wood, &c.

Now, neglect in many cases of sickness will convert a simple injury into a serious one, and acute disease into a chronic one, with a corresponding drain upon any revenues supplied by personal savings, private beneficence, or public charity.

Early help in sickness is invaluable. This does not merely consist in sending a medical man who gives a bottle of medicine; we now understand that medical relief comprises more than this. I do not undervalue medicine, but something more than medicine is wanted in every case of sickness. What are the requirements? Pure air, pure surroundings, food to build up tissue, and, above all, intelligent application of medical principles which the nurse gives. The consequence is, that under such conditions disease is cut short, the period of absence from work is lessened, the expense of maintenance diminished.

I know this from experience. I have had this economic subject under my eye for the last seven years, and I have no hesitation in saying that, at the Halifax Union Hospital, the period of sickness or detention in hospital has been materially cut short in all those diseases which are curable, and in that special class of diseases from which the outdoor worker suffers. Time

will not allow me to dwell too long on this point, but I give you three classes of cases.

1. ULCERS OF LEG.

You will find in all your Union hospitals numbers of cases of ulcers of the leg, which incapacitate men from working. These men remain in hospital for years. Under efficient nursing, these patients are quickly cured.

2. PULMONARY AFFECTIONS.

This class also gives us patients at all times of the year, who are largely benefited by early treatment, and frequently permanently cured.

3. CARDIOPATHS.

A large number come annually under treatment.

The duration of stay in hospital will afford a valuable index as to the efficiency of your hospitals, and especially if you confine your observations to acute diseases. The chronic cases are also much ameliorated by efficient nursing and liberal dietary, and a large number are sent out recruited for summer, spring, autumn; probably some come in again during the winter months.

The trained nurse will not allow hospital "loafers," and of whom there are so many to be found in Union hospitals. She is anxious to get her patients well, and nothing can equal the painstaking work done at St Luke's Hospital in regard to acute chronic disease and surgical cases by our nurses. They are disappointed if the patient remains in a long time—it is a kind of personal reflection; and this is the spirit we desire to encourage in the interest of the patient and of the ratepayer.

Now another economical question comes in here. If you want your nurse to do her work efficiently, it is necessary to provide for her suitable accommodation, good food, regular work, but relieved from monotony,

and an annual holiday, for nursing work is exhausting. The food of the nurses may be economically managed, even though you do not adhere to a rigid dietary of "beef and mutton," varied by "mutton and beef." I pass on to the question of hospital dieting. Your medical officer may very materially increase your annual expenditure, and hospital economies are well worth his consideration.

Hospital dietaries vary ; there is no uniformity ; it may not be desirable. I think we do owe to the ratepayers and to our Boards some regard for the expense. I believe we do recognise it. I submit to you two sets of Diet Tables—one from Halifax, the other from Cardiff (for which see pages 514, 515).

I have estimated, as you see, the cost of the Halifax dietaries per week, and Dr Sheen has calculated the Cardiff ones, and one cannot go very far wrong with such scales, which are made by me the basis of food-treatment.

The sick are placed on one of these dietaries, but this has to be supplemented and varied, and does not adequately represent all the cost per week. Herein comes waste. The patient is by right entitled to some form of diet, representing so much bread, so much meat, so many potatoes, so much milk, which is drawn each day, whether the patient can eat it or not. Here there is room for reform, but I am not prepared with a definite scheme. We have recognised it, and our Superintendent has tried to grapple with it in one or two ways. Extra bread is given to those who can eat it between meals from what is left, but it is made more appetising by a little jam or marmalade. Meat left over is made into little hashes, whilst potatoes are always used in some little tasty dish.

You know from your experience of your Union hospitals that the sick cannot eat each day the diet on their bed-cards, but you must have diet scales, and this must be drawn daily, otherwise the patient will com-

I.—DIET TABLE, ST LUKE'S HOSPITAL.

THOMAS M. DOLAN, M.D., *Medical Officer.*

Cost per Week.	No. 1.	No. 2.	No. 3.	No. 4.	No. 5.	No. 6.	Remarks.
	2/3	3/5 ³ / ₈	1/11 ¹ / ₂	2/5	2/5 ¹ / ₂ 2/3 ¹ / ₂ 2/2 ¹ / ₂	3/9 ¹ / ₈	
Breakfast	6 oz. bread ½ oz. butter 1 pint coffee	6 oz. bread ½ oz. butter 1 pint milk	6 oz. bread ¼ oz. butter 1 pint coffee	6 oz. bread ½ oz. butter 1 pint tea	6 oz. bread ½ oz. butter ½ pint cocoa	6 oz. bread 1 pint milk	
Dinner	3 oz. meat 4 oz. rice 2 oz. bread 4 oz. potatoes	4 oz. cooked meat 8 oz. potatoes	8 oz. pudding ½ pint beef tea 2 oz. bread	4 oz. cooked meat 8 oz. potatoes	8 oz. fish 4 oz. bread or 8 oz. potatoes 4 oz. chop or 2 eggs 8 oz. rice pudding	4 oz. bread 1 pint beef tea	Green vegetables occasionally when in season.
Tea	6 oz. bread ½ oz. butter 1 pint coffee	6 oz. bread ½ oz. butter 1 pint milk	4 oz. bread ¼ oz. butter 1 pint tea	6 oz. bread ½ oz. butter 1 pint tea	6 oz. bread ½ oz. butter ½ pint tea	6 oz. bread 1 pint milk	

II.—DIET TABLE, CARDIFF UNION HOSPITAL.

ALFRED SHEEN, M.D., *Medical Officer.*

Cost per Week.	No. 2.	No. 3.	No. 4.	No. 5.	No. 6.	No. 7.	Remarks.
	2/9	2/7½	2/2	2/5	*	2/-	
Breakfast, 8 A.M.	6 oz. bread ½ oz. butter 1 pint tea	8 oz. bread ½ pint milk		4 oz. bread ½ oz. butter ½ pint cocoa	6 oz. bread ½ oz. butter 1 pint tea	6 oz. bread 1 pint gruel ½ pint milk	
Dinner, 12.30.	6 DAYS. 4 oz. cooked meat 12 oz. potatoes TUESDAY. ½ pint pea soup 4 oz. bread	2 oz. bread 1 pint beef tea	DAILY. 8 oz. bread 2½ pints milk	3 oz. cooked meat 8 oz. potatoes	8 oz. potatoes 6 oz. fish or 8 oz. potatoes 4 oz. chop 4 oz. bread or 2 eggs Rice pudding	Same as House Diet	
Supper, 6 P.M.	6 oz. bread ½ oz. butter 1 pint tea	3 oz. bread 1 pint milk Porridge		1 pint milk porridge 4 oz. bread	6 oz. bread ½ oz. butter 1 pint tea		

* Cost with beef tea, 3/9; with chop, 2/10; fish, 3/-; eggs, 2/8.

plain. This is one part of Poor Law economics upon which collective wisdom may throw a light.

The dietetic question presents another aspect in reference to the use of stimulants. My practice is based on my rule with regard to my own private patients. I order stimulants, but not in a routine way. Beer is rarely given, never *pro forma*. Other stimulants are given in medicinal doses, in *ounces*—so many table-spoonfuls so many times a day. I have fully considered this question in all its bearings. I admit that there are many who are brought to the Union hospital through drink and improvidence therefrom, but they do not amount to 18 per cent. My statistics on this point agree with those of one of the greatest observers of the habits of the very poor, viz., Mr Charles Booth, who, inquiring into the condition of 4,000 of the submerged, found that of the causes of poverty—

	4 per cent.	were loafers.
14	„	were addicted to drink.
27	„	were poor through illness or misfortune.
55	„	were poor through questions of employment.

So that this reason cannot be legitimately urged, viz., that for the benefit of the 18 per cent. we should penalise the 82 per cent. whose illness may be due to legitimate causes. I admit that the medical officer should exercise vigilance over the stimulant question, but his hands should not be absolutely tied.

Before passing from the environment of the hospital, where nowadays the sick poor are humanely treated, where dietaries and nursing are ample, and medical aid of the most effective kind, I might add one or two words on the humanising influence of the nurses, and the healthy influence they exercise on their patients—influences which have to my knowledge extended in many cases outside the hospital walls, leading to a return to better ways on the part of many men and

women. We cannot measure in money weight human sympathy, or the kindness or devotion to work on the part of the nurses ; but yet I venture to say it has to be reckoned with as a great economic force. I also cannot but think that the personal visits of the Guardian who disinterestedly and kindly interests himself in hospital work, visiting the wards, encouraging all by his words, lifting the fallen, reproofing maybe, but sympathising with deserving objects of charity, must also have a high economic value.

The sick poor who are admitted to the modern Union hospital are more fortunate than those who remain outside in their own homes, and my final words will be briefly devoted to outdoor medical relief. The same principles are applicable. Effectual aid is equally desirable. Is it available?

You have a large staff of medical officers who are engaged to attend the outdoor poor at their own homes, to give not only first aid, but to attend in prolonged and serious cases of illness. If we look at the economical conditions of this staff we shall find that the principle of economy is very manifest. Medical officers are appointed who have large, sometimes enormous, districts, who find their own medicines and appliances, and who are paid at such a scale that each visit is remunerated at about the rate of one farthing.

The old argument is used. The law of supply and demand comes in. If Guardians can obtain medical men at such a price, why should they pay more? The answer is not for me to give ; but I am anxious to direct your attention to some aspects of these appointments.

1. Efficient aid is what is wanted. Neglect may convert a common cold into a serious illness. The medical officer who is called in ought, in order to complete his work, to be able to prescribe for his patient, and also to order any necessary food. It appears to me that it must hamper the medical officer to find all necessaries out of his salary, and certainly

as he deals with disease in the most unfavourable surroundings, he requires other help. His medicine alone can do very little good unless supplemented by nursing in the houses of the poor. The outdoor Poor Law nurse seems to me a fitting complement to perfect your system. This nurse should visit all cases attended by the Poor Law medical officer, and give force to all the medical directions. She should supervise all removals to your hospitals, and she should assist in many other ways. I am not in favour of increasing the work of the outdoor medical officer by this, viz., by keeping cases out of the hospital under his care. No, I think that it is better to send into your hospitals all cases that require prolonged or careful nursing and good food. I very much regret to note that there is such repugnance to the Poor Law hospitals, that patients remain out as long as they can, often without medical aid, and sometimes only enter to die, swelling the death-rate in our hospitals. The Guardians also know that a number of patients are sent in who are approaching their end. It is difficult to know how to deal with this class of case. In many instances it would be more economical to increase the outdoor relief for the few days such patients may live, besides being more humane. With outdoor nurses this would be possible.

We cannot disguise from ourselves that there is, too, a repugnance to apply to the parochial medical officer. This feeling is laudable, but is a reflection on the system which ought not to exist at the present day when you are humanising your work. I do not want you to break down the barriers or to make it any easier to obtain *free* medical advice. No, but I do want to convince you that you ought not to give simply *cheap* medical advice; that as you are entrusted by the State with the relief of suffering amongst the poor, you should give effectual medical aid, and that you cannot give effective aid without the best machinery.

Gentlemen, in conclusion I can only repeat I am

not a doctrinaire ; I give you my views and suggestions for what they are worth. It needs great care in administering your Poor Law funds, avoiding parsimony as well as extravagance. There never was a time when the needs of the deserving poor were more carefully considered and relieved, no country like England where the sick poor are more tenderly and devotedly nursed.

Medical advice in sickness is the great question of the day, agitating the philanthropists from one end of England to the other. All kinds of schemes have been formulated to grapple with sickness amongst the labouring poor, but I hold that with an efficiently organised Poor Law system no poor person should dread the approach of sickness, and that for medical aid in sickness there should be no stigma in accepting such aid from the Poor Law.

DISCUSSION.

The discussion was opened by

Mr GUY (Bradford). In thanking Dr Dolan for his paper, he said that he thought that Guardians realised that if there were any people who deserved their kindly consideration it was the sick poor. They could not do too much in looking after these poor people. In his Union they had come to the conclusion that to do what Dr Dolan suggested was the cheapest and most economical plan of dealing with the sick people. It was his privilege two years ago to visit the Birmingham Parish Workhouse and Infirmary. In the hospital there they had 1,200 cases, and they tabulated the time that these people remained in hospital. Compared with the period before they had trained nursing, and when they used to rely upon pauper helps—when they had the antiquated system—the length of time that people were in hospital had been reduced by a period of two weeks on the average. (Cheers.) He thought it was for Guardians generally to take that fact into serious consideration. When they were spending money and employing efficient and trained nurses, and obtaining the best medical skill and advice that they could, they were not extravagant, but the true economists. In dealing with the question of outdoor nursing, the doctor had laid stress on the importance of only employing thoroughly equipped and competent men. He had also called their attention to the necessity of the employment of skilled

district nurses. Many Unions thought that it was only necessary to advertise in the papers and get medical men at the lowest price to do this work. Was that the cheapest policy for them to adopt? He maintained that it was not. The first thing they should look to was that they had efficient medical men, and not the cheapest man they could get. As to district nursing, they in the Bradford Union had come to the conclusion that they would be doing a great service to the poor sufferers, to be found in the poor homes of the city, if they engaged a trained nurse to visit them in their homes, dress their wounds, and attend to them when sick. They found that the expense was somewhat heavy, but, nevertheless, they said they would not let the thing go untried. They found that there was a Bradford Nurses' Guild, who were endeavouring to cover the whole of Bradford with trained nurses, and they eventually decided to subscribe one hundred guineas to this institution if they would provide two trained nurses to attend the cases that came under the Guardians' medical officer. He believed that the Guardians now felt thoroughly convinced that it had been a deed of mercy, and that it was economical, because these poor people were enabled to get back more quickly to their work, restored in health and strength.

Dr RHODES (Chorlton) said that Dr Dolan claimed that provision had been made for the infirm, the dying, and the incurable; but there was one class that had not been mentioned, the epileptic. He ventured to think that they would study true economy by combining with other Unions in the provision of accommodation for the epileptic and insane. He was quite sure that point would have to be carefully considered by Boards of Guardians in the future. When the public realised the amount of disease and sickness that came into the workhouses simply through the abominable houses in which people had to live, the house-letter would have a very hard time of it. (Hear, hear.) He did not suppose that in any of the larger towns the loss was less than a quarter of a million a year. When a man was sick, he not only cost money, but there was the loss to the State of the money that he should be earning. In regard to waste of food, he would mention what had been done at Chorlton. It was said that a ration must be drawn, but they said "No." They had had statistics very carefully prepared, and by the new system they found that they were saving 14 cwt. of bread per month. (Cheers.) They told the Local Government Board that they did not mean to adhere to the old dietary, because their system was a better one. He had an interview with the Local Government Board, and the result was that a committee had been appointed to inquire into the dietaries of the Workhouses of England, and it would meet next month. It had been said that the sick poor in the infirmary were more fortunate than those outside in their homes. That was so. In many cases the home was so filthy that it was impossible for the patient to recover there, and yet the patient would insist on staying there. He was not sure whether that was not abuse of the word "liberty." They had

power to remove in infectious cases, and he held they should have the same power in cases where the houses were utterly unfit for human habitation. He thought that the prejudice against the hospitals was dying very fast, and, in fact, sometimes they had people coming in who should not, but he was certain that the hospital was one of the greatest economic forces they had with which to fight the evils of pauperism. The best way to relieve the poor-rates was to go in for education—mental, moral, and physical; but at the present time, the better the hospitals were, the better for the rate-payers, and the less they would have to spend in the future. (Cheers.)

Mr WRAGGE (York) said that the paper appeared to be a very fitting corollary to the exquisitely written paper of Miss Gibson. There was no branch of Poor Law work worthier of more earnest consideration than that of the nursing of the sick poor. People who had struggled with adversity all their lives ought to be allowed to terminate their existence as comfortably as possible. Dr Dolan's statement as to the pay of medical officers was entirely at variance with their practice at York. Dr Dolan said that some medical officers got a farthing a visit to pauper cases. In York they paid their medical officer £150 per annum, and that worked out at more than a shilling a visit. A farthing a visit would mean that their officer would have to pay 144,000 visits a year, or over 400 a day.

Mr HOBSON (Beverley) said that he had on such occasions been asked what use such Conferences were to the small country Unions. He thought that the proceedings that day supplied an answer. The representatives of the small Unions sometimes, no doubt, wondered what the Conference was talking about; but he had heard with satisfaction the two papers read that afternoon. Such papers tended to strengthen the good opinion of their country friends in regard to Poor Law Conferences. (Hear, hear.)

Mr WOODHEAD (Huddersfield) said he rose to compliment Dr Dolan on the very admirable paper he had read. (Hear, hear.) He was convinced that it was more economical to give each inmate just what quantity he wanted, rather than to serve rations. He had recently visited the United States, and found that the accommodation in their poorhouses was wretched, and the treatment of the poor altogether below the average in this country, both in regard to food and housing. The epileptics are kept in separate establishments.

Rev. W. H. STANSFIELD (Leeds) said that the medical profession, and those who had to administer relief, felt that in Leeds they had an ideal medical officer. (Cheers.) He (the speaker) could not agree that the changes in nursing had been quite so sweeping as they were represented. His memory went back a long while, and he could remember that the sick poor used to be very well cared for by the attendants. Dr Dolan mentioned stimulants. On that point he would give them the figures for Leeds during the past twelve months. The total value of stimulants supplied to the outdoor poor for the twelve months ending 9th November was £8. 12s. 9d., or an

average of 3s. 4d. per week, whilst the average number of outdoor poor was 3,500. In the infirmary they had always from 600 to 650 patients, and the total cost of stimulants (for year ended last Michaelmas) was 14s. 9d., a weekly average of 3¼d., or a yearly cost of one-third of a penny per inmate.

Dr DOLAN, in reply, said that when he was appointed in 1868 at Halifax, his salary was £100 a year, out of which he had to provide his own medicines. The Board afterwards, in response to an application from him, agreed to provide the medicine. His salary was now £200 a year. But there were plenty of Boards of Guardians which were giving only £10, £20, or £50 a year, out of which the doctor had to find his own medicines. (Shame.) He urged that better treatment should be extended to his profession.

It was resolved to hold the next Conference at Wakefield, the date to be left to the discretion of the Executive Committee.

Mr KAY (Huddersfield) intimated that he would at next Conference move a resolution on the question of vaccination.

The Hon. Sec., Mr ARTHUR T. LONGBOTHAM, was unanimously re-elected, and cordially cheered upon consenting to take office for another year. With regard to Mr Hobson's remarks, he desired to inform the Conference that he made special efforts to get papers that would be of interest to country Unions. Out of twenty-five Unions represented there that day, nearly all were large centres.

The Executive Committee of the Conference were re-elected, with the addition of Mr Wragge for York.

The representatives at the Central Conference were re-elected, viz. :—Messrs G. F. Aspinall, Halifax; J. Brown, Dewsbury; and T. A. Guy, Bradford.

A vote of thanks to the President for his conduct in the chair, and for entertaining the lady Guardians to lunch, was carried with acclamation.

In responding, the Chairman said that it was his first experience of Poor Law Conferences. He was sorry now that he had not entertained all the members.

The proceedings then terminated.

The President presided in the evening at a banquet at the Queen's Hotel. The toasts included "The President" and "The Readers of the Papers."

REPORT

OF THE

SPECIAL CENTRAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE, HELD IN
THE "THRONE" ROOM OF THE HOLBORN RESTAUR-
ANT, LONDON, W.C., ON TUESDAY, 23RD NOVEMBER
1897, ON THE DRAFT SCHEME FOR A POOR LAW
UNIONS ASSOCIATION.

WILLIAM BOUSFIELD, ESQ., IN THE CHAIR.

The following Representatives of Boards of Guardians in England and Wales
were present :—

METROPOLITAN DIVISION.

CHELSEA—

Dunn-Gardner, A. A. C.

FULHAM—

Lawson, P. (Chairman).

Marsh, T. A. (Clerk).

Proper, Rev. P. S. G.

HACKNEY—

Browne, Mrs E.

Coles, F. R. (Clerk).

HAMPSTEAD—

Cropper, J. C.

Finlay, Mrs G. A.

Preston, H. W. (Clerk).

ISLINGTON—

Hill, Miss H.

Kelly, J.

KENSINGTON—

Franklin, H. A.

Reade, Rev. C. D. (Vice-Chairman).

Rutherglen, J. H. (Clerk).

LAMBETH—

Dunn-Gardner, Mrs A. A. C.

Turner, J. E.

LEWISHAM—

Brunning, J. S.

And another.

POPLAR—

Bacon, S.

Crooks, W.

Wyatt, Rev. J. T.

ST GEORGE-IN-THE-EAST—

Browne, J. R. (Clerk).

ST OLAVE'S—

Collins, J. E.

ST PANCRAS—

Lidgett, Miss E. S.

Parr, Mrs.

ST SAVIOUR'S—

Hamel, Rev. E. T.

SHOREDITCH—

Clay, R. (Clerk).

Nicolson, C. N.

STEPNEY—

Maud, W.

Todd, J.

WANDSWORTH AND CLAPHAM.

Henderson, A. N. (Clerk).

Kidman, C. (Vice-Chairman).

Milligan, D. (Chairman).

WESTMINSTER—

Hill, R. C.

WHITECHAPEL—

Brady, G. F.
Brown, J. (Chairman).

SOUTH-EASTERN DIVISION.

BERKS.

ABINGDON—

Cannon, A.
Challenor, B. (Clerk).
Clutterbuck, Rev. F. C. (Vice-Chairman).

Bradfield—

Povey, J. J. (Vice-Chairman).
Willink, H. G. (Chairman).

WALLINGFORD—

King, J. P. (Chairman).
Manley, J. S. L.
Young, Rev. W. H.

HANTS.

ALVERSTOKE—

Crouch, E. T. (Chairman).
Field, W. O. (Clerk).

BASINGSTOKE—

Lawford, L. (Vice-Chairman).
White, Rev. A. L.

PETERSFIELD—

Tomlinson, Rev. E. M.

PORTSEA ISLAND—

Bishop, J. (Vice-Chairman).
Ellis, S. R. (Clerk).
Palin, H. (Chairman).

KENT.

BLEAN—

Burch, J. (Clerk).
Farley, G.
Wood, R. W. (Chairman).

DOVER—

Carder, E. (Clerk).
Pepper, M. (Chairman).

EASTRY—

Payne, Rev. D. Bruce (Chairman).

MEDWAY—

Norman, A. R. (Clerk).
Stigant, A. (Chairman).
Viney, G. R. (Vice-Chairman).

SEVENOAKS—

Carnell, G. F. (Clerk).
Few, Rev. C. E. (Chairman).

STROOD—

Baker, T. H. (Chairman).
Povey, J. E. (Assistant Clerk).
Prall, G. W. (Clerk).

SURREY.

CROYDON—

Allen, G. J.
List, H. (Clerk).
Shirley, W. S.

EPSOM—

Brown, W. S. J.
Jay, E. B.

HAMBLEDON—

Boys, H. S.
Case, —

RICHMOND—

Dimbleby, F. W. (Vice-Chairman).
Wood, A. J. (Clerk).

SUSSEX.

EASTBOURNE—

Brodie-Hall, Miss W. L.
Jeffery, L. (Clerk).

HORSHAM—

Stirling-Hamilton, Genl. Sir W.,
Bart.

SOUTH MIDLAND DIVISION.

BEDFORDSHIRE.

LUTON—

Burgess, J. A.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

WYCOMBE—

Flint, H.
Lovegrove, W. (Chairman).
Reynolds, B. L. (Clerk).

MIDDLESEX.

EDMONTON—

Ball, G.
Shelton, F. (Clerk).

HENDON—

Eck, A. J. S.

UXBRIDGE—

Hilton, Rev. A. D. (Vice-Chairman).
M'Callum, J.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

BRIXWORTH—

Cox, Rev. Dr (Chairman).
York, W.

KETTERING—

Bradley, Rev. J. F.
Lane, C. W. (Clerk).

PETERBOROUGH—

Dean, G. H. (Vice-Chairman).
Little, H. (Chairman).
Pettit, W. (Clerk).

EASTERN DIVISION.

ESSEX.

BRAINTREE—

Curtis, Rev. A. F.

CHELMSFORD—

Algar, R. J. (Vice-Chairman).
Barnard, Rev. M. R.
Duffield, W. W. (Clerk).

COLCHESTER—

Brown, Rev. G. G.
Gray, A.
Sparling, A. S. B.

TENDRING—

Beadel, Rev. F.
Girling, J. W.

WEST HAM—

Good, E. (Vice-Chairman).
Harris, W. G.
Roberts, Mrs E.

SUFFOLK.

IPSWICH—

Cautley, Rev. R. H.
Tozer, Rev. W.
Vulliamy, A. F. (Clerk).

SANDFORD—

Edgell, H.
Thwaites, T.

SOUTH-WESTERN DIVISION.

DEVONSHIRE.

PLYMOUTH—

Adams, W. (Clerk).
Wilcocks, H. S. (Chairman).

SOMERSETSHIRE.

BRIDGWATER—

Anderson, Rev. C. G. (Chairman).

CLUTTON—

Dury, J. S. (Clerk).

WILTSHIRE.

CHIPPENHAM—

Buckley, Rev. Canon (Vice-Chairman).
Rooke, Miss F.

SALISBURY—

Hammick, W. M.
Perkins, T.

WEST MIDLAND DIVISION.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE.

BRISTOL—

Boutflower, C. E. S.
Jones, W. (Vice-Chairman).
Simpson, J. J. (Clerk).

NORTHLEACH—

Dutton, Hon. and Rev. F. G.
(Chairman).

HEREFORDSHIRE.

HEREFORD—

Ronalds, H. (Chairman).

WEOBLEY—

Davenport, Rev. G. H. (Chairman).
Leather, F. H. (Clerk).

SALOP.

ATCHAM—

Allen, T.
Everest, J. (Clerk).

STAFFORDSHIRE.

BURTON-UPON-TRENT—

Barber, J. L. P. (Chairman).
Chamberlin, C. F. (Clerk).

CANNOCK—

Cole, J.
Roach, J. W. (Clerk).

LICHFIELD—

Lonsdale, Miss S.

WALSALL—

Lavender, F. W.
Lewis, A. H. (Clerk).
Yardley, J. (Chairman).

WEST BROMWICH—

Ward, H. (Clerk).
Wells, A. L. (Chairman).

WOLVERHAMPTON—

Cope, —
Greensill, T. D.

WARWICKSHIRE.

BIRMINGHAM—

Clucas, W. J. (Chairman).
Gateley, S. (Vice-Chairman).
Manton, H. J.

COVENTRY—

Arch, J. (Clerk).
Pegg, T. G. (Chairman).

RUGBY—

Pendred, J. W. (Clerk).
Townsend, Dr T. S. (Chairman).

WORCESTERSHIRE.

EVESHAM—

Bourne, Rev. Canon.

KING'S NORTON—

Docker, E. (Clerk).
Fallows, T. S. (Chairman).

NORTH MIDLAND DIVISION.

LEICESTERSHIRE.

ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH—

Denton, Rev. Canon (Chairman).

LEICESTER—

Andrew, A. (Vice-Chairman).
Holland, D. G. (Chairman).

LUTTERWORTH—

Bannister, A.
Bodycote, T. C. (Clerk).
Squirrell, Rev. C. G.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

MANSFIELD—

Hibbert, G. H. (Clerk).
Morris, Rev. E. E. (Chairman).

NOTTINGHAM—

Wright, J. K. (Chairman).

NORTH-WESTERN DIVISION.

CHESHIRE.

BIRKENHEAD—

Carter, J. (Clerk).
Denman, E. (Chairman).

BUCKLOW—

Hignett, Rev. Canon (Chairman).
Leigh, G. (Clerk).

STOCKPORT—

Brady, W. H. (Chairman).
Johnson, C. F. (Clerk).
Rayner, Dr E.

LANCASHIRE.

BARTON-UPON-IRWELL—

Cooke, Rev. E. H.
Ellison, D. (Vice-Chairman).
Whitworth, J. W. (Clerk).

BOLTON—

Cooper, H. J. (Assistant Clerk).

BURY—

Firth, S. (Vice-Chairman).
Isherwood, J. (Clerk).
James, Rev. H. W.

CHORLTON—

Bloomfield, D. S. (Clerk).
Rhodes, Dr J. M. (Chairman).
Tomlinson, C. L. (Vice-Chairman).

LIVERPOOL—

Hagger, H. J. (Clerk).
Laurence, T. D. (Vice-Chairman).
Moss, J.

MANCHESTER—

Fisher, G. F. (Chairman).
Macdonald, G. (Clerk).
Russell, G. H.

PRESCOT—

Davies, G. (Chairman).
Mann, A. F. (Clerk).

PRESTWICH—

Hennesy, Rev. J.
Husband, Dr
Ogden, E. W. (Clerk).

ROCHDALE—

Cryer, J.
Leach, R. A. (Clerk).

SALFORD—

Curley, T.
Hill, S. (Chairman).
Townson, F. (Clerk).

TOXTETH PARK—

Abercrombie, W.
Jennings, W. (Chairman).
Mather, R.

WARRINGTON—

Pilling, G. (Chairman).
Sutton, J. C. (Clerk).

WEST DERBY—

Cleaver, H. P. (Clerk).
Mead, G. L.

WIGAN—

Ackerley, H. G. (Clerk).
Ball, E.
Johnson, Mrs A.

YORKSHIRE DIVISION.

EAST RIDING.

KINGSTON-UPON-HULL—

Feldman, H. (Deputy-Governor).
Pickering, R. S. (Governor).
Winter, R. H. (Clerk).

SCULCOATES—

Jackson, W. (Assistant Clerk).
Lawson, W.
Porter, J. (Chairman).

YORK—

Wragge, R. H. V. (Vice-Chairman).

WEST RIDING.

BRADFORD—

Bentham, F. H.
Grey, T. A. (Chairman).

DEWSBURY—

Brown, J. (Vice-Chairman).
Peace, J. (Clerk).
Smith, W. (Chairman).

HALIFAX—

Aspinall, Rev. G. E. (Chairman).
Longbotham, A. T. (Clerk).
Tillotson, J. W. (Vice-Chairman).

HUDDERSFIELD—

Fitton, C. (Vice-Chairman).
Whitwam, E.

HUNSLET—

Banks, J. (Vice-Chairman).
Mee, F. W. (Clerk).

KEIGHLEY—

Clough, W. (Chairman).
Spencer, G. E. (Clerk).

LEEDS—

Child, H.
Dobson, A.
Hobson, A.

NORTH BIERLEY—

Helmsley, J. E. (Clerk).

PONTEFRAC—

Bentley, J. W. (Chairman).
Wordsworth, T.

SHEFFIELD—

Forsdike, W. D.

TADCASTER—

Rhodes, J. C.
Smith, T. B.

WAKEFIELD—

Beaumont, H. (Clerk).
Haigh, N.
Wordsworth, T. (Chairman).

NORTHERN DIVISION.

DURHAM.

DARLINGTON—

Feetham, J. (Chairman).

GATESHEAD—

Affleck, R. (Chairman).
Craighill, G. (Clerk).

SOUTH SHIELDS—

Archbold, R. (Chairman).
Coulson, J. W. (Clerk).

WESTMORELAND.

EAST WARD—

Brunskill, Rev. J.

KENDAL—

Cropper, Hon. Mrs.

MONMOUTH AND WELSH
DIVISION.

SOUTH WALES—CARMARTHENSHIRE.

LLANDILOFAWR—

Herbert, H. (Chairman).
Lewis, R. S. (Clerk).

GLAMORGANSHIRE.

CARDIFF—

Beaven, F. J.
Harris, A. J. (Clerk).

SWANSEA—

Haynes, G. B. (Clerk).
Lewis, Rev. Dr J. G. (Chairman).
Mill, W. H.

The following Visitors and Members of the Central Committee not delegated were present :—

Fleming, B., L.G.B. Inspector.
Jenner-Fust, H., L.G.B. Inspector.
Bury, Rev. Canon.
King, Austin J.
Strutt, Hon. F.

The following Unions paid the Fee for Delegates, but appear not to have been represented :—Blofield, Conway, Farnham, Paddington.

[*Note.*—If the names of any of those present are omitted it is in consequence of their tickets having been insufficiently or not at all completed.]

PROCEEDINGS.

It having been proposed, seconded, and unanimously carried that Mr Bousfield should take the chair, that gentleman accordingly did so, and called upon Mr Chance, the Hon. Secretary of the Central Committee, to read the Report of that Committee, which was as follows :—

REPORT OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

The Committee have to report that at the Central Poor Law Conference, on 9th and 10th March 1897, the following resolution was agreed to :—

“ That this Conference is of opinion that a Poor Law Unions Association should be formed, and requests the Central Poor Law Conference Committee to take the requisite steps forthwith to give effect to this resolution.”

The Committee lost no time in acting upon the resolution, and at a meeting of the Committee on the 26th April 1897, a draft scheme for the constitution and rules of the proposed Poor Law Unions Association, which had been drawn up by the Rev. G. E. Aspinall, the Chairman of the Halifax Board of

Guardians, was presented and discussed, and referred to a Sub-Committee for consideration and report.

This Sub-Committee met on the 31st May 1897 for that purpose, and, with a few alterations, recommended the draft scheme for adoption by the Central Committee.

At a meeting of the Central Committee on the 21st July 1897, the draft scheme was fully considered, and, with some further alterations, adopted.

This draft scheme, which is now in the hands of the Conference for its consideration, the Committee recommend for adoption.

Of the 649 Boards in England and Wales, it appears that there are 486 who had, at the date of the last census, populations of less than 50,000, whose annual subscriptions would be £2. 2s. ; 83 with populations between 50,000 and 100,000, and whose subscriptions would be £3. 3s. ; 40 with populations between 100,000 and 150,000, whose subscriptions would be £4. 4s. ; 20 with populations between 150,000 and 200,000, whose subscriptions would be £5. 5s. ; and 20 with populations exceeding 200,000, whose subscriptions would be £6. 6s. If, therefore, all the Boards joined the Association, the annual income would be £1,682. 1s.

The number of Unions represented at the Conference to-day is 119. Of these, 20 have a population of under 25,000, 30 between 25,000 and 50,000, 22 between 50,000 and 100,000, 17 between 100,000 and 150,000, 13 between 150,000 and 200,000, and 17 over 200,000. There are also 10 Unions not represented at the Conference who have expressed their willingness to join the Association if formed.

In reference to the representation of Unions at this Conference within and without the 50 miles radius mentioned in the Poor Law Conferences Order, 40

Unions (of which 18 are Metropolitan) are within the 50 miles radius of London, and 79 Unions outside that limit.

The Committee also desire to state that, as the Conference does not come within the terms of their agreement with Messrs P. S. King & Son as to the reporting and publication of Poor Law Conferences Reports, a Report of the Conference will only be published in case the number of copies of it required by Unions are sufficient to cover the expenses of the same ; and they think it well to remind the Conference that Boards of Guardians are empowered to buy copies of the Report under the Poor Law Conferences Order.

The CHAIRMAN—Ladies and gentlemen, we have met to-day as a Central Poor Law Conference for an unusual kind of business. As a rule our proceedings are merely deliberative. We discuss questions of principle, and sometimes by resolution deal with those questions, but to-day we have administrative and legislative business. The rules which have been used in previous Conferences will not be quite applicable here, and it will be necessary to hear members of this Conference speak from their seats.

No speaker will be allowed to speak for more than three minutes unless he is moving an amendment to the scheme which is proposed. I shall allow speeches to be made without notice, but it would help our proceedings very much if those ladies and gentlemen who propose to speak on certain clauses or amendments will send up their names previously. I shall then be able to call upon them. In each case I shall be very much obliged if, when a delegate is speaking, he will mention his name and that of the Union of which he is a delegate. By that means I hope we shall be able to get through a great many amendments without waste of time. For the purpose of doing that I propose to ask you to discuss certain questions of principle by themselves in the first instance. There are two or three points upon which a very great deal depends. Mr Challenor, the Clerk to the Abingdon Union, has proposed what is in effect a separate scheme. That scheme proposes, that instead of delegates being elected to the Association by the various Boards, the Boards themselves should be the members of the Association, and that they should be able to delegate whom they wish to represent them at the meetings of the Council and of the Association.

I think that if the scheme proposed by Mr Challenor is approved by the Conference, a very great deal of the scheme proposed by the

Committee will be swept away. On the other hand, if it is not accepted, we shall be able to put aside many amendments which are incorporated in his scheme.

With regard to the relations of Clerks of Unions to the scheme, a question of principle also arises, and I think it may be possible very early in the day to decide what the relation of the Clerks to the proposed Association shall be. I think that that, and the proposed amendments by the Keighley Union as to the method of electing the Council, form the principal questions of principle, and I think if those are decided in the first instance, we shall be able very rapidly to get through the amendments, and only leave the small details to be dealt with.

An amendment by Mr Cropper, the President of the Northern District Poor Law Conferences, has been sent round to the Boards of Guardians. I have had an opportunity of considering what the relation of that is to the proposals of the Committee. The matter was discussed by the Central Committee last night, and after consideration I determined to hold, as to the first part, viz., "That this Conference, in reference to the scheme of a Poor Law Unions Association brought up by the Central Committee, is of opinion that in view of the difficulties which have to be met in the formation of such an Association, the whole question should be postponed for the present"—that that would practically be a motion of the previous question, and would be in order; but that the second part, viz., "That in the meantime the Central Committee should be authorised to take such steps for the protection of the general interests of Guardians as may appear to them desirable from time to time"—directing as it does the Central Committee to take other steps, does not fall within the deliberations of this Conference to-day, and is therefore out of order.

Mr Cropper is unable to be present, and if in fact he were present, he is not a delegate. He does not propose to move this amendment, but I will call upon Mr Willink, who is here, to make a statement with regard to that matter.

Mr WILLINK (Bradfield)—I will not take up the time of the Conference unless it is the wish of the Conference, but my view is this, that as Mr Cropper is an experienced man, and as I know the view he takes, it seems to me that the Conference should be placed at some time or other in possession of his views. As he is not here to state them, it seems to me that it would hardly be right to postpone the discussion of his amendment until after the other amendments unless the Conference knew well what was going to be done. (Cries of dissent.)

The CHAIRMAN—Of course I merely asked Mr Willink to state this matter, as it was a question which I thought it was desirable to settle in the first place. I will now call upon the Rev. Mr Aspinall to move the adoption of the rules and constitution of the Association.

A DELEGATE—Do we understand, Mr Chairman, that this motion

of Mr Cropper's is not going to be moved, because it appears to me to be manifestly absurd to let us discuss the rules for an hour, and then eventually decide we are going to do nothing at all. I move that Mr Cropper's resolution lie on the table. I am instructed to do so by my Board.

The CHAIRMAN—I shall certainly rule that no motion of the previous question can be made until the end of the first amendment, and I shall not allow Mr Cropper's amendment to be taken up by any other member without proper notice.

Rev. G. E. ASPINALL (Halifax)—I need not occupy very much of the time of this Conference in performing the duty delegated by the Central Committee to me. This scheme which you have in your hands was originally drafted by me, but as you learned from the Report, the Committee saw fit to amend it in various particulars. The scheme has been in the hands of members of Boards of Guardians or their representatives for some time. It has been noticed and referred to by most of the Poor Law Journals, and I think, so far as my knowledge goes, there has been a great deal of discussion on it as well, and on the whole the criticisms have been of a favourable character. I simply formally move the adoption of the scheme, and leave it in the hands of the Conference to adopt or reject or amend, in any way they may think proper. It is now entirely out of my hands. I move the adoption of the scheme.

Rev. E. E. MORRIS (Mansfield)—It fell to my lot at the last Conference to second this proposition, and I now second it; but I should like to ask the Clerk whether any Board has disapproved the principle of the formation of the Association.

Mr CHANCE—I am not the Clerk, but the Secretary. One Board, the Woolstanton and Burslem Board, approves of Mr Cropper's amendment, but they are not here to-day.

Rev. E. E. MORRIS—I do not ask that, but whether any Board disapproves of the principle of the formation of the Association.

Mr CHANCE—No.

Rev. E. E. MORRIS—Why then, in the wide world, are we going to delay perhaps for another twelve months? The School Boards Association, the Urban Districts Association, and the Rural Districts Association there has been no difficulty in forming, and I do not think there will be any difficulty in forming this.

Mr WILLINK—All I have to say is this, I should rather perhaps not move the previous question. It seems to me that one of the great reasons for moving that is the point which is raised by Mr Cropper's amendment; but if there is a strong feeling in favour of the Association, and I am very much in the hands of the Conference as to that, there is no use taking up time. I should gather there is practical unanimity in favour of the scheme as it stands. I should only like to say that my own Board, having considered the scheme and the amendment of Mr Cropper, authorised me to come here and support his amendment if moved. There may be other Boards in a

like position—I do not know. I do not, under the circumstances, propose to move the previous question.

The CHAIRMAN—Then I understand that neither the previous question nor any modification of Mr Cropper's amendment is to be moved. I will now call upon Mr Challenor, who has given notice of a series of amendments. The first clause, if it be amended as he wishes, will stand in this way: "The Association shall consist of such Poor Law Unions as shall subscribe to the Association."

Mr CHALLENGOR (Abingdon)—The amendments to the scheme which I ventured to put down upon the paper to-day have not, I think you will admit, when you have heard what I have to say, been put down with any view hostile to the scheme which has been proposed by the Executive Committee. The amendments are based upon the experience I have gained as a member of the Rural District Councils Association and Municipal Corporations Association. Those Associations are composed of the various District Councils or Municipalities, and not of the representatives of those Councils, as is the suggestion of the scheme of the Executive Committee in this case. Therefore I venture to suggest that the Association which we are venturing to form to-day should consist of the Unions which are subscribing members of the Association, and not of the representatives of those Unions. I think that will be desirable and very much more satisfactory. With regard to Clause 3, I venture to suggest that the subscription of the smaller Unions should be £1. 1s. At present the smallest subscription is £2. 2s. for each Union having a population at the last census of less than 50,000. I have been desired by my Board to suggest a smaller subscription for smaller Unions, and I submit that £1. 1s. should be charged to small Unions with a population under 25,000. There are a number of small Unions of that character. I suggest the following amendment to Clause 4, dealing with the election of representatives: "Any Union, being a member of the Association, may send two representatives, one of whom may be their Clerk, to any meeting of the Council or of the Association, to represent the views of such Union." I venture to suggest there that the Clerks to the Guardians may be sent by their Boards to represent them, should they think it desirable in the interests of the Association that they should be sent to attend the meetings of the Council and of the Association. Clerks, as you know, in many instances take as much, sometimes more, interest than members of the Board themselves in matters affecting the Poor Laws, and if you can interest the officials in the administration of the Poor Laws, I think you would be likely to greatly strengthen the hands of the Association.

A DELEGATE—I rise to a point of order. Would it not be more convenient to the meeting if we take clause by clause?

The CHAIRMAN—I think it would be. To a certain extent the speaker has proposed an alternative scheme based on a different principle, and while I think it is undesirable that he should argue it

at length, I think if this first clause is rejected that all his other amendments fall to the ground. Therefore it is desirable that he should be able to express the general bearing of his scheme. I quite agree it is not desirable that he should go minutely into the other clauses.

A DELEGATE—Do you propose to discuss the whole of these amendments before you put the main question, whether we decide to form an Association or not?

The CHAIRMAN—May I explain that we have already determined to form an Association, and we are only discussing now the way that should be done? It will become my duty at the end of the discussion to put, that the whole body of rules as amended by the Conference shall be adopted.

A DELEGATE—I submit that you have not put to the meeting, Whether this meeting approves of any Association?

A DELEGATE—It was moved at the last Conference that an Association should be formed, and I think it is too late to move it now.

A DELEGATE—The resolution was moved from that table a few minutes ago. Would it not be as well to decide that an Association should be formed, and afterwards to decide how?

A DELEGATE—Is it not a fact that all this meeting has to do to-day is to deal with the constitution and rules?

Mr CHALLENGOR—With regard to the number of representatives, I venture to suggest that each Union should send two representatives to the meetings of the Association and of the Council. I do not think myself that it would be fair that the larger Unions should send more representatives than the smaller ones. I think we ought to stand on an equal footing even if the larger Unions pay a larger subscription. I do not think that the payment of the larger sum should entitle them to have greater weight, but the smaller Unions, not so large and not so wealthy, ought to stand upon an equal footing. The only interest we have is to do the best we can for the administration of the Poor Laws of the country, and not to give any particular class of Union a larger and greater weight than a smaller one.

Rev. E. T. HAMEL (St Saviour's, Southwark)—On a point of order, may I draw your attention to the fact that the matter should be dealt with *seriatim*? You have not put that.

The CHAIRMAN—No; I explained to the Conference that for the convenience of getting through our business we should hear the views of the speakers. It is the only way to get through our work without staying until "dewy eve." We had, I think, better go on in that way, but when this matter which is now before the meeting is decided—which is an amendment to the first clause—we shall be able to see how the matter stands.

A DELEGATE—Will the speaker confine himself to the first clause?

A DELEGATE—Will the speaker, having moved his amendment, be permitted to move the other amendments again as they arise?

A DELEGATE—We have a perfect right, I submit, to take this clause by clause, and I move that the first clause be taken and decided.

A DELEGATE—I should like to second that resolution. As the matter stands the amendments are all mixed up in one common stew. We want to deal with them intelligibly. I submit the only course and the right one is to take it clause by clause.

The CHAIRMAN—The speaker has been speaking to his first amendment. It is practically an alternative scheme, but I think it is very undesirable that he should go into more than his reasons to show that the amendment to the first clause should be adopted. I cannot say that the argument he has just been giving you is out of order, because he has been giving you the reasons which have impelled him to move the amendment now before you.

Mr CHALLENGOR—I shall not detain you more than one minute.

Mr LEACH (Rochdale)—I rise to a point of order. You say, sir, that the speaker is speaking to his first amendment. He is dealing with his various amendments to the various clauses, and I support Mr Hamel, who moved that the clauses should be voted on *seriatim*.

The CHAIRMAN—I am quite agreeable, so far as I am concerned, to carry out that view. I think they ought to be voted on *seriatim*. It is desirable in dealing with these questions that they should be grappled with as far as possible. I shall ask Mr Challenor to confine himself to his reasons for moving his first amendment. There are one or two of his amendments which do not hang with his alteration to the first clause, but many of them do, and the disposal of his first amendment will dispose of those.

Mr CHALLENGOR—Then to cut the matter short, I move that “the Association shall consist of such Poor Law Unions as shall subscribe to the Association.”

Mr WRIGHT (Nottingham)—I second the motion.

A DELEGATE—May I ask what that means? Does it mean that every one of the members of a Board of Guardians or Union is entitled to be a member?

The CHAIRMAN—It means that the Unions themselves, and not delegates from the Unions, are members of the Association.

A DELEGATE—Then that means what I said, that every member of a Board of Guardians or Union is entitled to be a member.

Mr DEAN (Peterborough)—It seems to me that Clause 4 should be taken in conjunction with this clause—“That Unions should be permitted to send representatives.” Those two should be considered together.

The CHAIRMAN—If no other member wishes to speak, I will now put the amendment. The amendment—I will read it again—is that the first clause shall stand in this way: “The Association shall consist of such Poor Law Unions as shall subscribe to the Associa-

tion." Those who are in favour of the amendment will signify in the usual way by holding up the right hand. (After counting.) It is lost by a large majority. (Cries of "No, no.")

The CHAIRMAN—If that decision is challenged, I will ask those who wish to vote in favour of the amendment to stand up, and I will count them. (After counting.) I think there is no doubt whatever that it is lost. I think it is fortunate that the next question of principle is also raised by an amendment to the first clause. The amendment by the Parish of Manchester, Croydon Union, and Bristol Incorporation is that at the end of the clause should be added—"Guardians and Clerks of Unions shall alone be eligible to be so elected." (Cries of "Agreed, agreed.")

Mr RUSSELL (Manchester)—I formally move that.

Mr JONES (Bristol)—And I second it.

The CHAIRMAN—I think it my duty to point out to the Conference what the result of that resolution would be. The result of that resolution would be that Clerks of Boards of Guardians and elected Guardians would stand exactly on the same footing as members of the Association. Does any member of the Conference wish to speak to this point?

Mr LEACH—I should like to ask, Why not? Why should not a Clerk stand upon an equal footing with an elected Guardian?

The CHAIRMAN—Those who are in favour of that addition being made to the rules please to signify in the usual way. That is carried. There is no amendment to Clause 2, but when you get to Clause 3 there is this amendment, that for each Union having a population at the last census of less than 25,000 the annual subscription shall be £1. 1s., of more than 25,000 but less than 50,000, £2. 2s.

Mr CHALLENGOR—I move that.

Rev. G. E. ASPINALL—I think there is no difficulty in accepting that. On behalf of my Committee I have great pleasure in accepting that.

Mr DURY (Clutton)—Having a similar amendment, I beg to second that.

A DELEGATE—Then it is, I take it—it is not so stated—to follow: "Of more than 50,000 but less than 100,000, £3. 3s.

The CHAIRMAN—Quite so.

Mr CROOKS (Poplar)—I should like to ask whether I should be in order now in moving as an amendment to the amendment that the maximum subscription be £2. 2s.

The CHAIRMAN—The amendment is this, with regard to the scheme of payment of the subscription of the various Unions, each Union having a population at the last census of less than 25,000, £1. 1s., of more than 25,000 and less than 50,000, £2. 2s.

Mr CROOKS—Then I want to speak against that amendment. This amendment seems to me to be rather touching the poorer Unions. I want to know whether the movers of this amendment intend where there is an increased payment there should be an

increased representation. Let us make it perfectly clear. The little Unions can pay their way very comfortably. There are some large Unions who cannot pay their way. That seems to me to be one of the chief things. If there is going to be a sliding scale according to the largeness of population, it seems to me that a good many of the large Unions will slide out of it altogether, and very properly so too.

The CHAIRMAN — I put the amendment. Those in favour. (Carried by a large majority.) I will now call on the representative of the Leicester Union to move their amendment that the maximum subscription be £2. 2s.

Mr HOLLAND (Leicester)—After the last Central Conference, and after we got the rules of this Poor Law Unions Association, the Committee of the Leicester Board took into consideration the amount of the payments that would be expected from the different Unions, and they take exception to the sliding scale as mentioned by Mr Crooks to-day. They feel that £2. 2s. would be fair to all, and that you would have greater interest shown in the work of the Association. If you make the subscription such an amount as will embrace all the Unions, you would have an amount which would be of the greatest service to the Association, and which would be ample to cover any preliminary expenses. I beg to move that on behalf of the Leicester Board.

Mr AFFLECK (Gateshead)—I second that.

Mr BROWN (Dewsbury)—You have heard from the Secretary that the number of Unions represented to-day is about 119. Now if we are only to have £2. 2s. from each of those—and I take it from the proposers of the amendment that that is so—if you take 120 Unions at £2. 2s. per head, it will not provide the necessary funds to work this Association with success. We want to provide funds to work it with probable success, and it will not be workable with that subscription. We want a working Association, not an ornamental one.

Mr JONES—I think if this amendment is carried, you will cripple the scheme from its start. It is clear to all that the small sum of money that would be at the disposal of the Association would be totally inadequate to carry on its work. I speak on behalf of one of the large Unions, and we felt that it was only right that a sliding scale should be used. We thought £2. 2s. should be enough for the smaller Unions, and that the others would not object to the larger subscription.

Rev. A. D. HILTON (Uxbridge)—Am I right that these guineas are thrown upon the rates? If they are, we shall not feel it whether we pay £1. 1s., £2. 2s., £3. 3s., £4. 4s., or £5. 5s.

Mr MILLIGAN (Wandsworth)—I do not object to the sliding scale for the lesser parishes or Unions. I do object to a maximum of two guineas. I think that the larger parishes and Unions ought to pay more than two guineas, having regard to the fact that it is essential that an important body like this should be provided with

sufficient funds to carry on its work properly, and with some degree of dignity.

A DELEGATE—I should like to point out that the London parishes have no delegates' expenses to pay.

Mr CRAIGHILL (Gateshead)—We must first find out what number of Unions are going to support the Association. Without that, how can we go to the Boards of Guardians throughout the country and point out that the subscription is not large enough? We have no right to assume that only 119 Unions will join. There is no way to find that out unless you communicate with the Boards of Guardians.

Mr BROWN—We have done so.

A DELEGATE—I venture to say you would agree to these fees put down if they came out of the rates.

Mr M'CALLUM (Uxbridge)—I rise to support my colleague's views. We are a large Union, and I think we ought to follow out the principle of a larger subscription for a larger Union. Although the sum in dispute is infinitesimal, I think the larger Unions ought to pay a larger subscription.

Mr FIELD (Alverstoke)—I think it may be useful if we can obtain some information as to whether these fees can be legally charged on the poor rates. The point that has arisen is a simple point; it is whether these fees are to come out of the rates, or whether the Boards of Guardians pledge themselves personally.

Mr ASPINAL—The Conference will be aware that there is an Order issued at present by the Local Government Board enabling Boards of Guardians to pay certain expenses to the Conferences. I am advised that we should apply to the Local Government Board for a similar Order for the purposes of this Association. There is no reason why, after the formation of this Association, we should not do so.

The CHAIRMAN—I now put the amendment, binding the subscription to two guineas as the maximum. (Amendment lost by a large majority.) On Clause 4, Mr Challenor's amendment falls to the ground. There is another amendment, that the second part of the clause should commence in this way: "On or before the 31st day of December in the first year, and on or before every subsequent 1st day of December, the Secretary of the Executive Council shall," &c. &c. That amendment is proposed by the Keighley Union.

Mr SPENCER (Keighley)—This amendment, together with an additional clause which is marked "8(a)" in the paper, was prepared with the idea of inducing smaller and district Unions to join this Association. It was thought that the district Unions would be more likely to join the Association if they had some means of exercising the power of representation.

The CHAIRMAN—I think your amendment only deals with the month.

Mr SPENCER—Yes.

The CHAIRMAN—Do you wish now to withdraw that amendment?

Mr SPENCER—I do.

The CHAIRMAN—The next amendment is by Mr Dury, and is directed to the representation of the various Boards. It is suggested that lines 9 to 12 should stand thus:—One representative if subscribing £1. 1s. ; two representatives if subscribing £2. 2s. ; three representatives if subscribing £3. 3s. ; four representatives if subscribing £4. 4s. and upwards.

Mr DURY—After passing Clause 3, this is simply a qualifier, and I will not waste any time about it. Under the scheme as it stands, there would be 485 Unions, having about 485 representatives, and paying about £1,000; and 164 Unions, having about 400 representatives, paying £617—that is, about 30s. a head. Therefore you find the larger and richer Unions paying less per head than the poorer. If my amendment is carried, 485 Unions will be represented by 611 representatives, and will pay £641; and the 164 Unions will have 570 representatives, and pay £614.

A DELEGATE—May I ask whether it is assumed then that all the Unions join?

Mr DURY—That is assuming all Unions join.

Mr VULLIAMY (Ipswich)—I second that.

Mr TURNER (Lambeth)—I think that four representatives from each Union paying £4. 4s. and upwards is too much, and I propose that two representatives should be the maximum.

The CHAIRMAN—I will now put Mr Dury's amendment as to the representatives, and ask for a vote upon that. (The amendment was lost.) Now, what is your amendment, sir?

Mr TURNER—That the maximum of each Union shall be two representatives.

The CHAIRMAN—An amendment has been proposed, which is not upon the paper, that the maximum representatives of each Union shall be two.

Mr GREENSILL (Wolverhampton)—I second that.

Mr CARTER (Birkenhead)—I support the amendment for this reason. The real difficulty is in sending a number of members to attend these meetings. The only solution of that difficulty which would give the large urban Unions of over fifty miles away a chance would be to carry this proposal of two members from each Union. That would establish equality all round, and in practice would work out very well.

Mr VULLIAMY—May I ask the Secretary whether there is not some hope that the Order in Council will be amended to allow a larger number of delegates to come from a distance?

Mr CHANCE—The Poor Law Conferences Order does not affect this Association; but as a matter of fact, I believe Unions beyond fifty miles will be able to send two Guardians and a Clerk to the Conferences instead of one Guardian and the Clerk.

Dr RHODES (Chorlton)—I should like to point out that I consider this is a most preposterous amendment, and I hope the Conference will vote against it.

Mr LEACH—May I be allowed to emphasise the fact that the large urban Unions are in a great minority, and I think that if they pay a greater subscription, they are entitled to have a voice and influence equal to their subscription and numbers. I do not wish to trespass on the patience of this Conference, but I do think it would be an unfair thing to us, coming as I do from an urban Union, to curtail the representation and influence of the urban Unions. The conditions of life in urban Unions are vastly different to those in rural Unions, and I do not think that urban Unions and rural Unions should have equal voices.

Mr CRAIGHALL—I should just like to say, coming from a large urban Union, that I think the Conference is quite large enough.

Mr RUTHERGLEN (Kensington)—I really do not think the meeting need trouble itself about this. This is an important meeting for the purpose of forming this Association, and I have no doubt, if this scheme is carried, we shall have to go to the Local Government Board on the subject of the subscriptions. Under Rule 3 the Unions will have to pay according to population, and I think representation should go with subscription. We do not appear to have provided for Unions with a population of less than 25,000, and I think that will have to be dealt with before we settle this clause.

The CHAIRMAN—I am averse to stopping discussion, but I think we have discussed this at sufficient length.

Dr GOMER LEWIS (Swansea)—I support most heartily the last speaker. I should like to address the meeting in the vernacular, in which I should be more fluent, but I will speak in English. I will not apologise for my English, because I am perfectly certain that I can speak English better than you can speak Welsh. We have in Swansea over 100,000, and in Parliament we have two members to represent us, and I think it only fair that we should be properly represented in the Association. (The speaker then referred to a number of rural Welsh Unions, the names of which the reporter could not catch.) I do not think it would be right for those Unions to have the same number of representatives as we have.

Mr WRAGGE (York)—I hope the Conference will not carry the amendment now before it. I was going to move that there should be three representatives.

The CHAIRMAN—The amendment that I am now putting is that the maximum shall be two representatives.

Mr TURNER—With the Clerk.

The CHAIRMAN—I do not think, having passed that the Clerk should be sent as a representative, we should include the Clerk.

Mr TURNER—As mover of the resolution, I am entitled to add "the Clerk." (This was refused from the chair.)

The CHAIRMAN—I now put the amendment as it stands. (The

amendment was lost.) Now does Mr Franklin wish to move the amendment of which he has given notice? That amendment is to insert in line 8, after the word "elect," the words "in addition to its Clerk, should it so desire." It will run thus: "Each subscribing Board of Guardians being entitled to elect, in addition to its Clerk, if it so desire," &c. &c. I put it to Mr Franklin that the amendment put just now covers that.

Mr FRANKLIN (Kensington) — Such being the feeling of the meeting, I am willing to withdraw that amendment.

Mr RUTHERGLEN—I think it would be better to take a vote upon that.

The CHAIRMAN — Mr Rutherglen thinks it desirable that the question whether the Guardians should be entitled to send their Clerk in addition to their representatives should be put. Therefore I would ask the Conference, although Mr Franklin has been allowed to withdraw his amendment, to consider that amendment.

Rev. Dr Cox (Brixworth)—I rise to say that I think that the Guardians should be free, if they think fit, to elect their Clerks as their representatives. They will be of far greater service if they are sent as representatives, and not merely as Clerks, and it would be much better to send them as representatives. That undoubtedly is the wish of the Poor Law Clerks Association. I have had a letter from Mr Clay, the Clerk to that Association, to that effect.

Mr SIMPSON (Bristol)—May I suggest that that objection will be met by the amendment which will be moved by Mr Vulliamy.

Mr CLAY (Shoreditch)—I would point out that the Clerk would be elected, and not be there in an *ex officio* sense. In the one case the Board would have increased representation by electing their Clerks, but in whatever sense they came, you would have to send them. If they were not sent, they would not come.

Mr DIMBLEBY (Richmond)—There will be a tendency for every Board to send its Clerk if this amendment is carried, and we shall thus have an undue proportion of Clerks in the Association.

Mr BROWN—I regret that you put this question. This is an important question, affecting the status and position of the Clerks in this Association. In the scheme as drafted they are members of the Association, but they are consultative members, and it appears to me that that is the best way in which they can serve the interests of this Association. If you are going to send two or three representatives, and one of them is your Clerk—supposing the Chairman of a Board of Guardians and the Clerk were sent—you would put the Clerk in the very invidious position of perhaps having to vote against his own Chairman. If the Clerk is a consultative member, he would have no hesitation in giving his advice according to his view. On his own Board he has no vote, but his influence is all the greater in consequence. And if a large number of the smaller Unions were to send up their Clerks, it would unquestionably, in the eyes of the Local Government Board, minimise the importance of the deliberations of

the Association. (Cries of "No, no.") Somebody says "No, no," but I say it would.

Mr SIMPSON—Has not this question been settled by Clause 1?

The CHAIRMAN—It seems to me in one sense that it has, but I do not think this amendment is out of order, because it introduces a second method of bringing the Clerks into the scheme. The result of the vote on this particular clause will be to show exactly where the Clerks stand with regard to the scheme.

Mr DUFFIELD (Chelmsford)—So that a Chairman is to be put into the position that he shall go and consult his Clerk on the way he shall vote? I pity the Chairman, and I pity the Clerk. I have had a long experience of the Poor Laws, and I should object to be placed in the position that I am to be a dummy—that I am to put my hands in my pockets and say nothing.

The CHAIRMAN—I have not the amendment before me by Mr Franklin.

Mr LEACH—On a point of order. Did not Mr Franklin withdraw his amendment?

The CHAIRMAN—That is so, but I think it best to let it be put.

Mr CROOKS—I want the Conference to seriously consider whether it is forming a Clerks Association or a Poor Law Unions Association. I have not the slightest objection to the Clerks coming as representatives of their Unions, and I shall be much astonished if they are influenced by their Chairman or other members. It is absolutely necessary that Boards should have the opportunity of electing Clerks, but not over and above the ordinary number of their representation. I hope the Conference will not stultify itself by allowing every Board of Guardians in the kingdom, if it thinks right, to elect their Clerk.

A DELEGATE—I am anxious that the Clerks may act as representatives. The first clause has practically been carried, and I hope the Conference will say that any Board of Guardians can, if they like, send their Clerk as one of their representatives.

A DELEGATE—I move that the question be now put.

The CHAIRMAN—I think it is clear that the meeting wish it, and I will now put the resolution.

A DELEGATE—May I ask what the resolution is?

The CHAIRMAN—Mr Franklin's amendment as to whether Boards of Guardians should be entitled to elect their Clerk if they so desire. (The amendment was lost.)

Mr PRESTON (Hampstead)—I wish to say that whilst agreeing with my friend Mr Rutherglen, that there should be no question as to the power of Boards of Guardians to elect their Clerks as members, an amendment has been moved and carried that they shall be eligible. I would move that the clause be referred back to the Committee to carry out the decision of the Conference. It is purely a matter of drafting.

A DELEGATE—It is now laid down that they are eligible^a; but if they come now, they must take the place of one of the Guardians.

The CHAIRMAN—I do not think this amendment is a very serious one. Is it your pleasure that this first clause shall be referred back to the Committee. (“No, no.”) There is one matter which I think I must bring up at this point. You have passed a resolution that Unions of less than 25,000 shall subscribe £1. 1s. But you see, as at present drafted, only Unions subscribing £2. 2s. are entitled to send a representative at all. Should it not run—“One representative if subscribing £2. 2s. or less”?

Rev. H. W. JAMES (Bury)—One representative if subscribing £1. 1s. or £2. 2s.; two representatives if subscribing £3. 3s. or £4. 4s.; and three representatives if subscribing £5. 5s. and upwards.

A DELEGATE—I have the pleasure to second that resolution.

A DELEGATE—From my experience of a country Board of Guardians, I should say that a country Board should be entitled to send two representatives.

The CHAIRMAN—The amendment which is now before us the mover is anxious to modify. He now wishes two representatives if subscribing £2. 2s. or less. Do you permit him to alter his amendment? (Cries of “Agreed.”) I will now put the resolution—“Two representatives if subscribing £2. 2s. or £1. 1s.; three representatives if subscribing £3. 3s. or £4. 4s.; and four representatives if subscribing £5. 5s. or £6. 6s.” (The amendment was carried.)

Mr VULLIAMY—After the amendment that has been carried, that Clerks as well as Guardians should be members of the Association, it is necessary to make a verbal alteration in the clause. I propose to amend it by substituting the word “representatives” for “members.” (Agreed, without discussion.)

Dr RHODES—There is another alteration which I move be made, viz., that the 15th day of January be altered to the 15th day of April, and the 31st day of January to 15th day of May, as it is absurd that representatives should be elected for three months only, as may happen under the rule as drawn.

The CHAIRMAN—You have heard Mr Rhodes. Do you agree to that? (Cries of “Agreed.”) Then there is an amendment by Dr Cox, that lines 20 (from “The Association”) to 22 of Clause 4 be deleted. (Agreed without discussion.)

Mr VULLIAMY—The next amendment which I suggest is the power of co-opting twenty-five Guardians or Clerks. (Cries of “No.”) It is a question whether there should be any co-option or not. I venture to point out to you that there are many members whom it is felt may be very useful in the carrying out of the work of the Association, and who should not be left out on any terms. I venture to move the resolution.

The CHAIRMAN—Is Mr Vulliamy’s amendment seconded?

Mr RUTHERGLEN—I should like to support Mr Vulliamy’s amendment because—

Dr Cox—I rise on a point of order. These lines have been struck out. Are we to go on with them?

The CHAIRMAN—A motion has been already carried that these lines be struck out, and the matter cannot be further discussed unless there is a proposition to replace them in some such form as this: “That the Association may at its first meeting elect not more than twenty-five Guardians or Clerks of Unions of England and Wales to be additional members of the Association.” That would be a proper amendment, although the lines as they stand have been struck out. Mr Vulliamy and Mr Rutherglen have practically spoken to that amendment, that you have here on the paper, and therefore I think I may put the question now. The amendment will be that the last paragraph stands as I read it just now. (The amendment was lost, and the proposed amendments by the Bristol and Manchester Boards to a similar effect were withdrawn.) The next amendment is by the Leicester Union, to amend the first paragraph of Clause 5.

Mr SIMPSON—Is it not necessary to alter Clause 5 entirely now, in view of the fact that the dates have been altered in the previous clause?

The CHAIRMAN—I think that gentleman is quite right. It will be necessary to put in such a date as the Committee think fit.

Mr LANE (Kettering)—May I ask what the Central Poor Law Conference will do after the formation of the Poor Law Unions Association?

Mr SIMPSON—May I move it in this form, to strike out the words after the word “first”? I suggest it in view of the difficulty with regard to the dates of meeting of the Central Conference and the Poor Law Unions Association being held together. Let it read: “The first and all subsequent annual meetings shall be held on such dates as shall be fixed by the Executive Council.”

Mr HOLLAND—That will meet the wishes of the Leicester Committee, so as to avoid two visits to London. The object we have before us is a mere matter of saving expense if we could.

The CHAIRMAN—The Leicester Union’s amendment is before the meeting. Is it seconded?

A DELEGATE—I second it.

Mr LEACH—If the Leicester Union’s amendments are carried out, it will tie us up to meeting in London immediately before or after the Poor Law Conference. I say an Association of this importance ought to be left free and unhampered by the Poor Law Conference. I do not think we ought to be tied up to meet immediately after or before the Poor Law Conference.

The CHAIRMAN—I put the amendment to the meeting. (The amendment was lost, and the amendment proposed by Mr Simpson was then agreed to.)

Mr RUSSELL—I move in Clause 6 that “the meetings of the Association shall be held in London, or in such other of the larger towns in England as may from time to time be determined by the

Executive Council." (Agreed, with the substitution, suggested by Dr Rhodes, of the words "other place" in lieu of "other of the large towns in England.")

The CHAIRMAN—On Clause 7, Mr Challenor's amendments drop out. The one by the Croydon and Leicester Unions and the Bristol Incorporation stands to strike out the words "may be elected from outside the Association, and." (Amendment agreed to.) The next is in line 9 to alter the figures "24" to "30."

Mr SIMPSON—I beg to move that, as we have adopted the principle that we are not going to specially mention the Clerks, as they will be no doubt represented on the Council as representatives of their Boards, therefore I move the number be increased from 24 to 30.

A DELEGATE—If this amendment is carried, may not the whole of the 30 be Clerks?

Dr GOMER LEWIS—Would it not be better to increase the number to 40 instead of 30?

The CHAIRMAN—It is moved by another amendment that 40 should be the number. (Amendment lost.) Then by the Bristol Board of Guardians it is proposed—"Of whom 24 shall be Guardians, and 6 Clerks." I put that amendment. (Amendment lost.) Then I suppose the words at the end of the line will fall out. In order to square with what we have done, the word "member" in the next line should be "representative." (Agreed.) And "30" take the place of "24." (Agreed.) Lines 16 (from "The whole") to 18 will also fall out. (Agreed.) Mr Challenor's amendments, Clauses 7A and 7B, providing for the election of Unions as the Council by means of voting papers, go out too. The amendment by the Keighley Union, Clause 8A, providing for the nomination by Unions of candidates for the Council, and their election by means of voting papers, is withdrawn. And the amendment by Dr Cox to Clause 8, is also withdrawn.

Mr SIMPSON—Should not lines 10 to 12 of Rule 8 be inserted in Rule 4?

The CHAIRMAN—I think so.

Mr CHANCE—I beg to move as an addition to Clause 4—"That any representative who shall cease to be a Guardian or Clerk to a Board shall *ipso facto* cease to be a member of the Association, but any vacancy occurring thereby in the representation of a Board may be filled up by such Board until the next Annual Meeting." (Agreed.)

The CHAIRMAN—Then the words "of the Association," in line 12 of Clause 8, will be deleted. (Agreed.) Then Mr Challenor's voting clause goes. Then we come to Clause 9.

Mr HOLLAND—I think I should be wise to withdraw the first amendment. (The amendment proposed by the Keighley Union, providing for a report of the proceedings at the meetings being sent round, was, with permission withdrawn; and the amendment pro-

posed by the Leicester Union, to the effect that a copy of the Council's yearly report should be sent out with the notice convening the meeting, was agreed to without discussion.)

The CHAIRMAN—The last clause—the definitions clause—goes, because it is based on Mr Challenor's amendments. I believe we have now dealt with all the proposed amendments.

Mr W. O. FIELD—With regard to the definitions clause, there are certain single parishes and incorporations.

The CHAIRMAN—What is it you move—"That there should be a clause saying that the word 'Union' should include separate parishes and incorporations"?

Mr FIELD—Yes. (Agreed.)

The CHAIRMAN—Now I have to put to you the whole body of the rules as amended. I do not know if any one desires to speak upon that.

A DELEGATE—I should ask that a copy of the report of this meeting be printed for future guidance.

A DELEGATE—At present we hardly know the position we are in.

Dr RHODES—Our friend over there has just raised an important point upon which I move that this Conference appoints a Committee to take such steps as are necessary to call the Association into existence, and gives them power to take steps to approach the Local Government Board.

The CHAIRMAN—I think, first of all, it is necessary to put the whole scheme as it stands, and as one or two members are anxious to speak on the question of the whole scheme as amended, I will call on Mr Willink to say a word.

Mr WILLINK—At the request of the Conference I did not address it before. I think I may say now what I wish to say. I do not think the Conference has ever had fully before it the reasons which might be brought forward against having an Association at all.

Rev. E. E. MORRIS—On a point of order. Has it not been decided that there shall be an Association, and are not the remarks we are now listening to against any Association being formed at all? I move that the question be now put.

Mr CRAIGHILL—I second that.

The CHAIRMAN—I am bound to take the motion that the question be now put. Those who are in favour of the scheme as amended. (The scheme was carried.)

Dr RHODES—I now move, "That this Conference proceeds to appoint an Executive Committee with power to approach the Local Government Board *re* expenses, such Committee to have all the powers of the Executive Council under the rules, until the first meeting of the Association."

Mr BROWN—I second that.

The CHAIRMAN—Do you mean that the Committee should be elected under the scheme, or that it should be a Provisional Committee?

Dr RHODES—A Provisional Committee. I move that the Committee consist of thirty persons. (Agreed to.)

The Chairman then requested the names of candidates for election on such Committee, when at least forty names were handed in, and eventually the Conference elected the Rev. E. G. Aspinall, Halifax; Rev. Canon Denton, Ashby-de-la-Zouch; Rev. E. E. Morris, Mansfield; Dr Rhodes, Chorlton; and Messrs J. Brown, Dewsbury; G. Craighill, Gateshead; H. J. Hagger, Liverpool; and A. F. Vulliamy, Ipswich, as eight of the members, with instructions to select the other twenty-two members from those whose names had been handed up.

A vote of thanks to the Chairman and to the Central Committee having been passed and acknowledged by the Chairman and by Mr Chance on behalf of the Committee, the proceedings terminated.

At a meeting of the eight gentlemen elected as aforesaid, the following were selected as the twenty-two other members of the Executive Committee:—Rev. Dr Cox, Prixworth; Rev. Dr J. G. Lewis, Swansea; Rev. C. G. Squirrell, Lutterworth; and Messrs W. Abercrombie, Toxteth Park; H. Child, Leeds; R. Clay, Shoreditch; W. Crooks, Poplar; J. S. Dury, Clutton; E. Good, West Ham; T. A. Guy, Bradford; S. Hill, Salford; J. Isherwood, Bury; J. P. King, Wallingford; P. Lawson, Fulham; R. A. Leach, Rochdale; H. List, Croydon; G. Macdonald, Manchester; H. J. Manton, Birmingham; D. Milligan, Wandsworth; R. S. Pickering, Kingston-on-Hull; J. H. Rutherglen, Kensington; and J. J. Simpson, Bristol.

APPENDIX.

CONSTITUTION AND RULES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
POOR LAW UNIONS IN ENGLAND AND WALES.*As submitted by the Central Committee.*

1. The Association shall consist of representatives of subscribing Poor Law Unions, elected in the manner hereinafter described.

2. The object of the Association is by complete organisation effectually to watch over and protect the interests, rights, and privileges of Boards of Guardians in their capacity as Guardians of the poor and administrators of public money, as they may be affected by legislation, public or private, of general application to Poor Law matters, or by the administration of any Department of the Government, and in other respects to take action in respect to any other subjects in which Poor Law Unions or Boards of Guardians generally may be interested.

3. The annual subscription, payable in advance on the 1st of January in each year, shall be :—

For each Union having a population at the last census of

less than 50,000	-	-	-	-	-	£2	2	0
Of more than 50,000 but less than 100,000	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	0
Of more than 100,000 but less than 150,000	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	0
Of more than 150,000 but less than 200,000	-	-	-	-	-	5	5	0
Of more than 200,000	-	-	-	-	-	6	6	0

ELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVES.

4. Members of the Association shall be elected annually by subscribing Unions in the manner hereinafter provided.

On or before the 15th day of January in each year, the Secretary of the Executive Council of the Association shall issue a circular to the Clerk of each subscribing Board of Guardians inquiring whether his Board desires to send representatives to the Association, and if so, requesting him to take steps for the election of such representatives, each subscribing Board of Guardians being entitled to elect—

One representative if subscribing	-	-	-	£2	2	0
Two	„	„	-	3	3	0
Three	„	„	-	4	4	0
Four	„	„	-	5	5	0

and upwards.

The Clerk to the Guardians shall, as soon as the election has

APPENDIX.

CONSTITUTION AND RULES OF THE ASSOCIATION OF
POOR LAW UNIONS IN ENGLAND AND WALES.*As amended and adopted by the Conference.*

1. The Association shall consist of representatives of subscribing Poor Law Unions, elected in the manner hereinafter described. Guardians and Clerks of Unions shall alone be eligible to be so elected.

2. The object of the Association is by complete organisation effectually to watch over and protect the interests, rights, and privileges of Boards of Guardians in their capacity as Guardians of the Poor and administrators of public money, as they may be affected by legislation, public or private, of general application to Poor Law matters, or by the administration of any Department of the Government, and in other respects to take action in respect to any other subjects in which Poor Law Unions or Boards of Guardians generally may be interested.

3. The annual subscription payable in advance on the 1st of January in each year shall be:—

For each Union having a population at the last census

of less than 25,000	-	-	-	-	£1	1	0
Of more than 25,000 but less than 50,000	-	-	-	-	2	2	0
Of more than 50,000 but less than 100,000	-	-	-	-	3	3	0
Of more than 100,000 but less than 150,000	-	-	-	-	4	4	0
Of more than 150,000 but less than 200,000	-	-	-	-	5	5	0
Of more than 200,000 -	-	-	-	-	6	6	0

ELECTION OF REPRESENTATIVES.

4. Members of the Association shall be elected annually by subscribing Unions in the manner hereinafter provided.

On or before the 15th day of April in each year the Secretary of the Executive Council of the Association shall issue a circular to the Clerk of each subscribing Board of Guardians inquiring whether his Board desires to send representatives to the Association, and, if so, requiring him to take steps for the election of such representatives, each subscribing Board of Guardians being entitled to elect—

Two representatives if subscribing	-	£1	1	0	or	£2	2	0
Three " "	-	3	3	0	"	4	4	0
Four " "	-	5	5	0	"	6	6	0

The Clerk to the Guardians shall, as soon as the election has

taken place, and in any case before the 31st day of January, forward to the Secretary of the Executive Council the names and addresses of the members of his Board who have been elected, and they shall be deemed members of the Association, and shall be entitled to attend the meetings of the Association. No persons whose names have not been sent in before the 31st of January shall be eligible to act as members of the Association. The Association may at its first meeting elect not more than twenty-five Clerks of Unions in England and Wales to be members of the Association.

MEETINGS OF THE ASSOCIATION.

5. The first meeting of the Association shall be held immediately before or after the meeting of the Central Poor Law Conference in 1898, and all subsequent Annual Meetings shall be held on such dates as shall be fixed by the Executive Council. Special meetings of the Association, of which seven clear days' notice stating the object shall be given, may be called at any time by the Executive Council, and shall be called by the Secretary of the Council on receiving a requisition in writing signed by not less than ten members of the Association, representing as many Boards of Guardians, stating their reason for desiring a meeting.

6. The meetings of the Association shall be held in London.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

7. The members of the Association shall at the Annual Meeting elect a President, who shall preside at all meetings of the Association and of the Executive Council if present, and two Vice-Presidents, one of whom shall preside at such meetings in the absence of the President, and an Honorary Treasurer. These officers may be elected from outside the Association, and shall hold office until their successors are appointed, but shall be eligible for re-election. The members of the Association shall also at the first Annual Meeting elect twenty-four of their number to be an Executive Council, and also may appoint not more than six Clerks of subscribing Unions to act on such Council.

Provided always that not more than one member of any subscribing Board of Guardians shall be elected to or sit upon the Council at one time. Of the twenty-four members, one-third shall retire annually, but shall be eligible for re-election at the Annual Meeting of the Association. The whole of the Clerks elected to sit on the Council shall retire annually, but shall be eligible for re-election at the Annual Meeting of the Association.

8. The Executive Council shall have power to appoint a paid Secretary, a Solicitor, and Parliamentary Agent (if necessary), but

taken place, and in any case before the 15th day of May, forward to the Secretary of the Executive Council the names and addresses of the representatives of his Board who have been elected, and they shall be deemed members of the Association and shall be entitled to attend the meetings of the Association. No persons whose names have not been sent in before the 15th day of May shall be eligible to act as members of the Association. Any representative who shall cease to be a Guardian or Clerk of a Board shall *ipso facto* cease to be a member of the Association, but any vacancy occurring thereby in the representation of a Board may be filled up by such Board until the next Annual Meeting.

MEETINGS OF THE ASSOCIATION.

5. The first and subsequent Annual Meetings of the Association shall be held on such dates as shall be fixed by the Executive Council. Special meetings of the Association, of which seven days' notice stating the object shall be given, may be called at any time by the Executive Council, and shall be called by the Secretary of the Council on receiving a requisition in writing signed by not less than ten members of the Association, representing as many Boards of Guardians, stating their reason for desiring a meeting.

6. The meetings of the Association shall be held in London, or in such other place as may from time to time be determined by the Executive Council.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

7. The members of the Association shall at the Annual Meeting elect a President, who shall preside at all meetings of the Association and of the Executive Council if present, and two Vice-Presidents, one of whom shall preside at such meetings in the absence of the President, and an Honorary Treasurer. These officers shall hold office until their successors are appointed, but shall be eligible for re-election. The members of the Association shall also, at the first Annual Meeting, elect thirty of their number to be an Executive Council.

Provided always that not more than one representative of any subscribing Board of Guardians shall be elected to or sit upon the Council, at one time. Of the thirty members, one-third shall retire annually, but shall be eligible for re-election at the Annual Meeting of the Association.

8. The Executive Council shall have power to appoint a paid Secretary, a Solicitor and Parliamentary Agent (if necessary), but

such officers shall not be members of the Council. The Executive Council shall also have power to engage and determine the tenancy of offices and rooms for meetings, and generally to conduct the business, financial and otherwise, of the Association. The Executive Council shall appoint a Parliamentary Sub-Committee out of its own number, and such other Committees as may be deemed necessary, and shall make rules for the proper transaction of its business. Any member of the Council who shall cease to be a member or Clerk of a Board of Guardians shall *ipso facto* cease to be a member of the Association and of the Council. Vacancies on the Council arising from this or any other cause may be filled up until the next Annual Meeting by the remaining members of the Council from among the members of the Association. Seven members shall form a quorum of the Council, and three shall form a quorum of any Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council. The Council and its Committees may hold their meetings in London or in any of the larger towns in England as they may from time to time determine.

DUTIES OF SECRETARY.

9. It shall be the duty of the Secretary to attend every meeting of the Association and the Executive Council, and to send summonses to the members of these bodies to attend their meetings, to record the attendance of each member of the Council, and to keep a correct record of its proceedings. He shall also prepare a report of the proceedings of the Council for presentation to the Association at its Annual Meeting, such report having previously been submitted to and approved by the Council. A copy of this report shall, after the Annual Meeting, be sent to each subscribing Union.

10. No expenses shall be incurred or paid except in pursuance of a resolution of the Executive Council.

11. An agenda paper setting out the business to be transacted at any annual or other meeting of the Association or of the Council shall be sent to each member of those bodies at least seven days before the meeting by the Secretary of the Council.

12. No alteration shall be made in the Constitution or Rules of the Association or Executive Council unless notice of such proposed alteration shall have been sent in writing by the member proposing it to the Secretary of the Council at least thirty days before the Annual Meeting of the Association, and on being submitted to such Annual Meeting shall not be adopted unless approved by at least two-thirds of the members present voting.

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10. No expenses shall be incurred or paid except in pursuance of a resolution of the Executive Council.

11. An agenda paper setting out the business to be transacted at any annual or other meeting of the Association, or of the Council, shall be sent to each member of those bodies at least seven days before the meeting by the Secretary of the Council.

12. No alteration shall be made in the constitution or rules of the Association or Executive Council unless notice of such proposed alteration shall have been sent in writing by the member proposing it to the Secretary of the Council at least thirty days before the Annual Meeting of the Association, and on being submitted to such Annual Meeting shall not be adopted unless approved by at least two-thirds of the members present voting.

13. For the purposes of these rules the expression "Union" shall include any parish having a separate Board of Guardians and Incorporations.

South-Eastern and Metropolitan District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

TWENTY-THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR THE COUNTIES
OF SURREY, KENT, HANTS, BERKS, AND LONDON,
HELD IN LONDON, AT THE SOCIETY OF ARTS, 10TH
DECEMBER 1897.

President—W. BOUSFIELD, Esq., J.P.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference.

* Guardians specially delegated by their Boards.

SURREY (11 Unions).

CHERTSEY—

*Bravington, W. (Chairman).

CROYDON—

*Drew, Miss R. M.

*Gardiner, J. W.

*Morland, C. C., J.P.

*List, Harry (Clerk).

EPSOM—

*Braithwaite, Basil, J.P.

*Brown, W. S. J.

Phillips, Rev. Canon.

FARNHAM—

*Mangles, Miss.

HAMBLEDON—

*Boys, H. S.

KINGSTON—

*Hadland, Miss S.

SURREY—*Continued.*

RICHMOND—

*French, Mrs.

*Newton, Miss Foster.

*Wood, A. J. (Clerk).

KENT (26 Unions).

BROMLEY—

*Lennard, Sir J. F., Bart. (Chairman).

*Akers, Miss.

*Hall, Mrs H.

*May, T.

DOVER—

*Pepper, M., J.P. (Chairman).

*Carder, Eugène (Clerk).

EAST ASHFORD—

*Brett, S. H.

*Ward, W. H.

*Hamilton, H. (Clerk).

KENT—*Continued.*

EASTRY—

- *Bruce Payne, Rev. Dr (Chairman).
- *Long, W. E. (Vice-Chairman).
- *Cloke, F. S. (Clerk).

ELHAM—

- *Holden, John (Chairman).
- *Bryan, Rev. E.
- *Lorden, L. W.

FAVERSHAM—

- *Cremer, C.
- *Filmer, A. N.

MALLING—

- *Reeves, Captain F. (Vice-Chairman).
- *Hawkes, Jesse.

MEDWAY—

- *Stigant, Adam, J.P. (Chairman).
- *Godsiff, R.
- *Hill, T.
- *Norman, A. R. (Clerk).

SEVENOAKS—

- *Few, Rev. C. E. (Chairman).
- *Carnell, G. F. (Clerk).

STROOD—

- *Smith-Masters, W. A.
- *Prall, G. W. (Clerk).

WEST ASHFORD—

- *Ballard, E.
- *Brown, A.
- *Huid, W. T.
- *Langley, G. (Clerk).

SUSSEX (23 Unions).

BATTLE—

- Egerton, G. R.

EASTBOURNE—

- *Jeffrey, L. (Chairman).
- *Brodie-Hall, Miss W. L.
- *Crake, Rev. E. E.

EAST PRESTON—

- *Beer, 'G.
- *Haynes, Rev. C. E.
- *Snow, A. D.

HASTINGS—

- *Elford, L. H.
- *Walder, T. J.

SUSSEX—*Continued.*

MIDHURST—

- *Lascelles, Lieut.-Col. H. A. (Chairman).
- *Wilberforce, R. G.

RYE—

- *Sharpe, T. G. (Chairman).
- *Curteis, Miss A. M.

STEYNING—

- *Hooper, Rev. R. P. (Chairman).
- *Field, Rev. S. B.

THAKEHAM—

- *Goasher, R.
- *Palmer, Rev. H.

HANTS (26 Unions).

ALVERSTOKE—

- *Crouch, Dr E. J. (Chairman).
- *King, G.
- *Tanner, Rev. C.
- *Field, W. O. (Clerk).

BASINGSTOKE—

- *Portsmouth R.
- *Pycroft, Sir R., Bart.

HARTLEY WINTNEY—

- *Hitchcock, A.
- *Johnston, J. Lindsay.

KINGSCLERE—

- *Holding, W. (Chairman).

PETERSFIELD—

- *Ponsonby, C. W. Talbot.
- Shield, Ridley.

PORTSEA ISLAND—

- *Palin, H. (Chairman).
- *Bishop, J. (Vice-Chairman).
- *Ellis, S. R. (Clerk).

SOUTH STONEHAM—

- *Platt, Captain A.
- *Wanden, A.
- *Wise, E. T.

WHITCHURCH—

- *Richards, J.

BERKS (12 Unions).

ABINGDON—

- *Cannon, A.
- *Clutterbuck, Rev. F. C.
- *Winship, Rev. C.
- *Challenor, Bromley (Clerk).

BRADFIELD—

- *Willink, H. G. (Chairman).
- *Bridges, R.
- *Slatter, Canon J.
- *Simmons, R. (Clerk).

MAIDENHEAD—

- *Walker, J. W. (Chairman).
- *Harter, P.
- *Wodehouse, Admiral.

NEWBURY—

- Tull, A. R. (Chairman).
- *Dolton, Miss.
- *Young, G. H.

READING—

- *Ackerman, D. W. B.
- *Bailey, A. N.
- *Cook, D. J.
- *Kift, C. (Clerk).

WALLINGFORD—

- *King, J. P. (Chairman).
- *Blunt, Colonel.

LONDON (30 Unions).

BETHNAL GREEN—

- Hand, Rev. J. E.

CHELSEA—

- *Eddis, F. E.

FULHAM—

- *Foss, J.
- *Graves, Mrs.

ST GEORGE'S IN THE EAST—

- Cowie, Miss.

ST GEORGE'S (Hanover Square)—

- Inderwick, Miss.

HACKNEY—

- *Barralet, Mrs P.
- *Elliot, J. R. R.

HAMPSTEAD—

- *Benecke, Miss Ida.

HOLBORN—

- *Baker, Miss.

LONDON—*Continued.*

KENSINGTON—

- *Fazakeley, F. J. N.
- *Wilson, R. H.

LAMBETH—

- *Dunn-Gardner, Mrs.
- Turner, T. E.

LEWISHAM—

- *Brown, W.
- *Bunning, J. S.
- *Down, D. T.
- *Penfold, P.

ST MARYLEBONE—

- *Alford, Rev. B. H.
- *M'Kee, Miss.

ST OLAVE'S—

- *Collins, J. E.
- *Ecroyd, W. H.

PADDINGTON—

- *Tillard, Miss M. A.

ST PANCRAS—

- *Lidgett, Miss.
- *Munday, Major H.
- *Sheppard, G. F., J.P.

POPLAR—

- *Bacon, S.
- *Crooks, W.
- *Wyatt, Rev. J. T.

SHOREDITCH—

- Clay, R. (Clerk).

STEPNEY—

- *Higley, Rev. F. H.
- *Mitchell, W. H.
- *O'Connor, James.

STRAND—

- *Evans, Mrs.
- *Painton, Miss M.

WANDSWORTH AND CLAPHAM—

- *Bray, W. T.
- *Brooks, R. Heygate.

WHITECHAPEL—

- *Brown, J. (Chairman).
- *Buxton, Noel E.
- *Murphy, Rev. P. J.
- *Vallance, W. (Clerk).

The following two Unions, which subscribed for the admission of Delegates at the Conference, do not appear to have been represented at it, viz. :—Gravesend and Milton, Woolwich.

VISITORS.

Fleming, Baldwyn,
Murray-Browne, T. Ll.,
Domville, E. J.,
Sperling, Arthur,
Constance, Marchioness of Lothian.
Boys, Mrs.
Lonsdale, Miss S.
M'Callum, Mrs.
Mackay, T.

} Local Government Board.
} Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences.

The following Unions were not represented either by Delegates or other Guardians :—

SURREY.—Dorking, Godstone, Guildford, and Reigate.

KENT.—Blean, Bridge, Canterbury, Cranbrook, Dartford, Hollingbourne, Hoo, Maidstone, Milton, Romney Marsh, Sheppey, Tenterden, Isle of Thanet, and Tonbridge.

SUSSEX.—Brighton, Chailey, Chichester, Cuckfield, East Grinstead, Hailsham, Horsham, Lewes, Newhaven, Petworth, Ticehurst, Uckfield, Westbourne, West Firle, and Westhampnett.

HANTS.—Alresford, Alton, Andover, Catherington, Christchurch, Droxford, Fareham, Fordingbridge, Havant, Hursley, Lymington, New Forest, Ringwood, Romsey, Southampton, Stockbridge, Isle of Wight, and New Winchester.

BERKS.—Easthampstead, Faringdon, Hungerford, Wantage, Windsor, and Wokingham.

LONDON.—Camberwell, St Giles', Greenwich, Islington, City of London, Mile End, St Saviour's, and Westminster.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

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Mr W. BOUSFIELD took the chair at 11 A.M., and called upon the Hon. Secretary (Mr W. Chance), who, having stated that he had received letters of apology for inability to attend the Conference from Mr H. Chaplin, M.P., Mr T. W. Russell, M.P., Sir Hugh Owen, K.C.B., Mr W. E. Knollys, and Dr Downes, of the Local Government Board; Lord Thring, Sir J. T. Hibbert, K.C.B., and other members of the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences,

read the following extract from a letter which he had received from Dr J. M. Rhodes (the Chairman of the Chorlton Board of Guardians):—

“The question of Isolation Hospitals I consider a most important one. My own view is that provision should be made by a combination of several districts. The danger of removing patients is very much less in the ambulances provided with pneumatic tyres than it was in the wretched traps that used to do duty as ambulances in the past.”

The HON. SECRETARY then read the Report of the Committee as follows :—

REPORT OF COMMITTEE.

The first matter to which the attention of the Committee was called during the past year was the necessity of framing rules of procedure for the regulation of the Conferences. They have therefore drawn up a set of rules which have been sent to every Board of Guardians in the two districts, and they hope they will meet with general approval. After careful consideration they came to the conclusion that, on the whole, it would be better not to allow resolutions to be moved. The Conferences are intended for discussion only; but if at any time any special question should arise on which it would be desirable to convene a Conference for the express purpose of passing resolutions, they would consider the advisability of suspending the rule for that purpose. The Committee is anxious to prevent resolutions being sprung upon the Conference, which it has had no opportunity of considering beforehand.

An instance in point occurred this very year, when a Special Conference of London Guardians and District Schools Managers was convened by the Committee to consider the draft order relating to the constitution of a new London Children's Asylum District. The convening of this Conference led to an invitation from the President of the Local Government Board to Chairmen of London Boards of Guardians and of District Schools to meet him so as to give him an opportunity of making a statement with regard to the order. Consequently, a most influential deputation, headed by Mr W. Bousfield, waited upon the President on the 20th February. It was most courteously received, and the object and scope of the order fully explained to it. The result of this deputation, and of the resolutions passed by the Special Conference, doubtless conduced to the withdrawal of the order. A full report of the proceedings at the deputation and at the Conference has been published, and it will form part of the Reports of Poor Law Conferences for the year 1897-98.

The Committee are sorry to have to announce the resignation of the Earl of Onslow as President of these Conferences, in consequence of his finding it impossible, owing to other public duties, to give that attention to the business of the Conferences which the importance of the work required. In accepting the resignation of his Lordship, the Committee wrote to express their deep sense of his great services to

the Conferences, and their great regret at his leaving them, and they are sure that this Conference will be animated by the same feelings.

They have also had to accept the resignation of Mr Wyndham Portal as a Vice-President. Mr Portal was probably the oldest member of these Conferences, and certainly of the Committee, on which he served so long ago as 1870. He was also a staunch supporter of Poor Law Conferences generally, and the South-Eastern District Conferences owe much to him. His resignation is therefore a severe loss, which will be felt by the Conference as well as by the Committee.

The Committee are glad to say that they have secured the valuable services of Mr W. Bousfield as President, and of Sir John Farnaby Lennard, Bart. (the Chairman of the Kent County Council and of the Bromley Board of Guardians), as one of the Vice-Presidents, who have for so many years been equally staunch supporters of these Conferences. Mr James Brown, the Chairman of the important Whitechapel Union, has also been elected a Vice-President to represent the Metropolitan Guardians. The Committee have also co-opted, as an additional member of the Committee, Mr C. N. Nicholson, a Guardian for the Parish of Shoreditch, and thus strengthened the representation of the Metropolis upon the Committee.

A statement of the receipts and expenses of last year's Conference was sent to every Board of Guardians in the two districts, which showed a balance over in the hands of the Hon. Secretary of 6s. 6d. This sum was supplemented by a balance of 8s. 1½d. from the Special Conference in February last, so that the Committee began this Conference year with a balance of 14s. 7½d.

The Conference is aware that the reporting and publication of the Reports has been taken over by Messrs P. S. King & Sons, of 12 and 14 King Street, Westminster. As the Central Committee has entered into a guarantee with the publishers to insure them against loss to the extent of £30, your Committee have thought it only fair to join in this guarantee to such an extent as the funds may allow, as other important District Conferences have also done.

The Committee hope that Boards of Guardians will continue to order copies of the Reports of these Conferences for the use of their members, as they have done in the past, and they would especially ask those Guardians who are present to-day to move their Board, when they return home, with that object. By so doing they will be promoting the interests of Poor Law Conferences in the most effective way.

The PRESIDENT, in opening the Conference, said :—

Since the meeting of this Conference a year ago, the course of Poor Law administration has proceeded without any remarkable change or incident. The conditions of trade and employment during last winter were good, and Guardians had not to meet

any widespread distress from absence of work, nor have had during the year any excuse for relaxing the strict rules for administration of relief, so necessary for maintaining an independent spirit amongst the poor. The same prospect would exist for the winter which is now commencing were it not for the great engineers' strike and lock-out, and for the possibility of a general strike of railway men. We are not yet able to forecast the result of the negotiations for a settlement in progress with regard to the former dispute ; but the men, on whom the onus of decision is now cast, should remember that, in addition to the necessity of maintaining cheap production in the face of rapidly growing foreign competition, the struggle brings distress and poverty to numbers of the less skilled labourers who are not members of the trades unions, but whose work is dependent upon that of the trained artisan, and have no resources like trades union funds or contributions to fall back upon. If the strike and lock-out continues, we may probably expect to see the number of applicants for Poor Law and voluntary charitable relief rapidly increase as the winter proceeds in all the industrial centres. The smaller shopkeepers dealing with working people will be unable to continue giving them credit for the necessities of life they purchase, and this method of forestalling future wages, which does so much to mitigate the pressure in the earlier days of an industrial war, but becomes in the end an additional embarrassment, will no longer help operatives much. If unfortunately such a condition of temporary poverty should have to be dealt with by Guardians this winter, we may hope that they will bear in mind the experience which has been gained in the past in similar difficulties, and will not act in panic, or without the fullest consideration. It is a cardinal point not to put aside the ordinary rules of giving relief. If wholesale out-relief be given, the result will be seen in the permanent pauperisation of a large number of the class affected. Every case should be dealt with separately after thorough inquiry into its individual circumstances, and the Relieving Officers should, if necessary, be aided by temporary inquiry officers acting under their instructions. The Guardians should keep in touch with those who are attempting to aid the out-of-work class by private and associated charity, so as to avoid overlapping of relief, and where help is given, they should give it adequately. In out-relief cases it is desirable that a task of work should be required from the father of the family assisted, not to be paid for by wages, but as a condition of the necessary assistance given. I have mentioned these rules as some of the principal ones, drawn from past experiences in dealing with industrial distress, because some Metropolitan and other Unions have sometimes adopted far laxer methods, and have not only saddled their ratepayers with an unnecessarily large poor rate, but with a pauperised class of able-bodied persons, who, both in and out of the Workhouse, refuse to do systematic work.

It is also impossible not to recognise that lavish relief in the case of

industrial strikes tends to the lengthening of the war between labour and capital. We may feel sympathy for the individual cases of hardship which result from it, and Guardians are bound to give suitable and adequate relief to all in destitution, but both for the community and for the work-people, the best event is the establishment of peace and resumption of work.

At this Conference last year a resolution was passed, after a discussion on vagrancy, for an inquiry by the Local Government Board into the best methods of treating vagrants. In a paper which I had the honour of reading it was pointed out that the evil was an increasing one, and that there was practical agreement amongst those having most experience of this unfortunate class, that uniformity of treatment, and a juster incidence of the cost of dealing with homeless and migratory cases, were absolutely necessary. The communication of this resolution was acknowledged by the Board, but no action has yet been taken. It is impossible to leave this serious question in its present condition without serious danger that the numbers of vagrants and casual poor will still further increase.

During the past month a representative Association of Poor Law Unions in England and Wales was formally constituted at a special meeting of the Central Poor Law Conferences, when the rules for its organisation were settled after considerable discussion. "The object of the Association is by complete organisation effectually to watch over and protect the interests, rights, and privileges of Boards of Guardians, in their capacity as Guardians of the poor and administrators of public money, as they may be affected by legislation, public or private, of general application to Poor Law matters, or by the administration of any Department of the Government, and in other respects to take action in respect to any other subjects in which Poor Law Unions or Boards of Guardians generally may be interested." If this Association is so directed as to faithfully represent the general views of Guardians, and promote their interests with tact and knowledge, it may have much weight with the Local Government Board and Parliament. It is at present doubtful how far Boards of Guardians may legally contribute funds to its expenses, but it appears to be in the power of the Local Government Board by order to legalise such payments, and I hope they may consent to take this course.

The relations between Boards of Guardians and the Local Government Board are very intimate. Probably in no other country but England would a system of control of popularly-elected bodies in every branch of their administration by the fiat of a Government and bureaucratic department work with the absence of serious friction seen here. That it should do so speaks much for the habits of compromise and of obedience to law and authorised rules in English people. It seems to me, after watching for many years the effects of this joint working of the Guardians and the Board, that on the whole the result is beneficial, and the present relations ought to

be maintained. The control and the rules of the Local Government Board tend powerfully to keep a certain level of good administration of the Poor Law higher than many Boards of Guardians would otherwise attain ; but they do in some cases, on the other hand, repress experiments which would be very valuable, and fetter the discretion of Guardians where the latter may be the best judges. I think, also, that the action of the Local Government Board does help to stop jobbery and attempts by Guardians to unduly favour pet officials.

There is only one other subject on which I would venture to take up your time by allusion this morning. Three years have now elapsed since Boards of Guardians were first elected under the more democratic conditions imposed by the Local Government Act of 1894, and early next year those numerous Boards whose members all have a three years' tenure of office will be entirely reconstituted by re-election. I suppose every one would admit that there has not been during the life of the present Boards any serious or general change in the spirit animating them from that of the previous Boards. In some Unions there has been a reaction leading to increase of out-relief, but it may pretty safely be assumed that experience will in time lead the administrators to the same conclusions that were held by the most earnest and thoughtful of their predecessors. In the approaching election, is it too much to ask that the ratepayers should try and elect Guardians for their fitness as administrators, their independence of character, their sympathy with and knowledge of the poor rather than for political and extraneous causes ? There is too great a tendency nowadays to bring Guardians' elections into the meshes of the political net, and to make them trials of strength between the opposing parties. Such treatment can only tend to the demoralisation of the Boards. There is nothing to prevent persons on opposite political sides having the same views on Poor Law administration, and working together in an absolutely harmonious manner. We can also understand the danger of a change of methods of relief being made a political cry, and provision being made for political partisans at the expense of the rates.

The views I have expressed have been formed during my experience of nearly twenty years as a Guardian, and I have ventured to put them before you to-day as they relate to matters of present interests in Poor Law administration, and as it is probably the last opportunity that I may have of speaking at a Poor Law Conference in that capacity.

The following Paper was then read :—

THE TREATMENT OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE IN COUNTRY DISTRICTS, AND PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO THE POOR LAW.

BY MR H. G. WILLINK,

Chairman of the Bradfield Board of Guardians and Rural District Council.

THE South-Eastern Poor Law Conference, comprising, as the district does, metropolitan, urban, and rural areas, cannot always be provided with subjects equally interesting to all the members who attend the meetings. Main principles no doubt apply almost if not quite universally, though there is room for considerable variation in the extent of their applicability. But besides these main principles, there are problems of importance which concern practically only one or other of the three classes of area. And it is to such a question, relating more especially to thinly populated rural areas, though it is not without bearing upon urban districts, that this paper is intended to call attention.

Stated briefly, the question is this, "What is the best way in a country district of securing prompt and satisfactory treatment and isolation of infectious disease *without giving Poor Law relief?*" I desire particularly to emphasise the Poor Law side of the problem, but there is also a good deal to be said from the point of view of sanitary administration, and it will be convenient to commence at this end.

The powers and duties of a Rural District Council, or Sanitary Authority, as regards cases of infectious disease are as follows, viz. :—

I. NOTIFICATION.—The Council may adopt the Infectious Disease Notification Act, 1889 (52 & 53 Vict. c. 72). Where they have done so, it will be the duty of (1) the head of the family, (2) the nearest

relatives in attendance on the patient, (3) any person (including the doctor) in charge of the patient, and (4) the occupier of the building, to give notice to the Council (under a penalty of 40s.) of the occurrence in any habitation, within the district, of smallpox, cholera, diphtheria, membranous croup, erysipelas, scarlatina or scarlet fever, typhus, typhoid, enteric, relapsing, continued, or puerperal fever. In practice, the doctor usually notifies, if one is attending. A fee of 2s. 6d. is payable to the notifying doctor, or 1s. if he is attending as medical officer.*

II. STEPS CONSEQUENT UPON NOTIFICATION.—Under the Public Health Act, 1875, the Council must see that the premises are properly disinfected at the proper time, and may pay for so doing in the case of poor persons (sec. 120); they may destroy bedding, &c., and give compensation (secs. 121, 308). Where there is a suitable place, any dangerous infectious case, being without proper accommodation at home, may be removed to such place by order of any Justice at the cost of the Council (sec. 124). They may provide hospitals or temporary places for the reception of the sick (sec. 131); and may recover the cost of maintenance, within six months of discharge, of non-pauper patients therein (sec. 132). They may arrange in the case of poor persons, and with the sanction of the Local Government Board, for the temporary supply of medicine and medical assistance (sec. 133). But it appears that they have not power to provide maintenance, or medicine or medical attendance, or nursing, except in such places. They, or any one else affected, may prosecute, under sec. 126, any person who

(a.) While suffering from a dangerous infectious disorder, wilfully exposes himself, without

* On the question of amendments required in the Notification Act, 1889, see Presidential Address by Dr Woodforde (M.O.H. Berks Combined Sanitary District) to the Incorporated Society of Medical Officers of Health.—*Public Health*, vol. x., p. 43.

proper precautions against spreading the same, in any street, public place, shop, inn, or public conveyance ;

- (b.) Being in charge of any person so suffering so exposes such sufferer ;
- (c.) Gives, lends, sells, transmits, or exposes, without previous disinfection, any bedding, clothing, rags, or other things which have been exposed to infection from any such disorder.

The penalty in any such case is a sum not exceeding £5. Except so far as they can do so under this section, the Council have no means of securing the discontinuation of work in dairies, laundries, shops, &c., by any person who, though not personally suffering from infectious disease, is nevertheless an inhabitant of a house in which such disease exists. And it appears to follow, that as they have no direct power to stop such employment, so they have no power to make compensation to any person who, even by reason of these threats of prosecution, is deprived of, or discontinues, such employment. (See 59 J.P. 163.)

There are other provisions relating to common lodging-houses, the letting of houses, use of public conveyances, &c., which need not now be mentioned.*

III. ISOLATION HOSPITALS ACT, 1893 (56 & 57 Vict. c. 68).—Under this Act an Isolated Hospital may be provided by a County Council for any one or more local areas (*i.e.*, districts or contributory places) upon the application of a District Council or report of a Medical Officer of Health. All expenses, except

* The Local Government Board have power to issue special regulations in case of any outbreak, "formidable" or otherwise (secs. 130 and 134). Under the Infectious Disease Prevention Act, 1890 (53 & 54 Vict. c. 34), which may in whole or in part be adopted by any Council, certain further powers as to the inspection and closing of dairies, the cleaning and disinfecting of premises and of bedding, clothing, &c., and the disposal of dead bodies and of infectious rubbish, are given to such local authorities as adopt the same.

actual patients' expenses, are to be paid by the local area or areas for which the hospital is provided, the County Council having, however, (sec. 21) power if they choose to contribute out of the county rate. The expenses of pauper patients are to be paid by the Guardians; those of other patients are to be paid by or for the patients themselves. There appears to be no express power either under this Act or the Public Health Act for the excusal, by a Council, of the expenses of non-pauper patients. The remainder of the Act need not be noticed.

Let us first consider the case of a Rural District such as Bradfield, possessing no Isolation Hospital. The steps taken under these powers by the Council of such a district, in which the Notification Act has been adopted, are probably much the same in most places. The notification will have been received by the Sanitary Inspector, and forwarded by him to the Medical Officer of Health.* The premises are visited by the Inspector, and, if necessary, by the Medical Officer of Health, and the case reported to the Council, or a committee, at their next meeting, with a report of what may have been done if there has been time to do anything. A paper of directions as to the best means of isolation is left, with personal explanations, at the house; inquiry is made as to the origin of the disease, and the occupation and the circumstances of the family. The neighbours and employers are warned; children are, if necessary, kept from school (a course often preferable to closing the school, which does not always prevent children from meeting on close terms); those members of the household who go out to work are cautioned against mixing with other people; and if

* This is probably better than that the notification should be sent straight to the Medical Officer of Health, whose duties usually embrace a wide area, as it is more likely to ensure prompt inspection.

the occupation of any of them at home or elsewhere involves special danger (*e.g.*, in the case of shopkeepers, or persons employed in laundries and dairy farms), particular care is taken that they shall understand the penalties to which they will be subject if they wilfully offend against sec. 126 (already quoted) of the Public Health Act, 1875. They are in fact told that, if need be, the Council will in such event prosecute them, even if they are not actually directed to discontinue their employment, a direction however which, as has already been stated, cannot legally be given in the form of a specific order,* except under the adoptive Act of 1890 in the case of dairies. These precautions are continued for a period varying with the nature of the disease, and the views of the expert advisers of the Council. In the Bradfield District, the practice in scarlet fever cases, the most frequent form of disease, has been to endeavour to secure the isolation of the patient and family for eight weeks from the date of the assumed commencement of the last case in the family. Arrangements may sometimes be made for the hiring of an empty cottage for either the patient or the rest of the family, or the bread-winners are urged to take lodgings elsewhere. At the termination of the period, the premises, clothes, and bedding, &c., are disinfected under proper supervision, and at the cost of the Council. Record is of course kept of the case. The annual reports of the Medical Officer of Health of the combined sanitary district in which Bradfield is included stretch over a period of twenty-five years, and are very instructive.† It is not every district which has had the advantage of so long an experience acquired by one officer.

* The prosecution is not very likely to be initiated, or to succeed, unless there has clearly been wilful default.

† See Appendix I. for statistics as to Bradfield, and Appendix II. for statistics as to the Berks Combined Sanitary District.

In the carrying out of these operations where there is no Isolated Hospital a number of practical difficulties arise. In the first place, there is the initial difficulty of securing notification at all. Besides *bona fide* ignorance or mere carelessness on the part of the families concerned, and *bona fide* mistakes, in slight or difficult cases, on the part of doctors, there is undoubtedly more or less wilful blindness, if not positive concealment, difficult of proof though this may be. The stricter the precautionary regulations, and the more close their enforcement, the greater the reluctance to take the first step towards coming within their scope. And the consequence is, that poor parents are very naturally not always over-eager to call in a doctor if a child has "spots" or a sore throat; nor is it any one definite person's duty and interest to search out and notify such cases.

Next, when notification has been duly received, there is the difficulty of getting the restrictions properly enforced. For the purposes of this paper it is not necessary to deal fully with this difficulty. It is enough to call attention to the particular branch of it which concerns the typical case of a breadwinner, who is not himself suffering from infectious disease, but in whose household the disease has occurred. Such a person may be practically debarred from earning his livelihood, unless he can do his work alone, or can turn his hand to some new and unobjectionable employment, or undertake to live apart from his wife and children during the prescribed period:—not that these expedients do necessarily ensure safety. Where the latter course is adopted, no one can be sure that the undertaking is really carried out, any more than, where other precautions are adopted, any one can be sure that a man who is kept separate from his fellows during work hours does not associate with them when off work, or that children who are kept from school do not mix freely with other children in play. A man may go to

live with a relative or take lodgings, and yet pay surreptitious visits to his own home after dark. Human nature is made that way. It takes a rousing good epidemic to make most people understand that when little Billy has been apparently quite well again for ten days, he may still be a very dangerous young person for three or four weeks longer. Indeed doctors themselves differ about the duration of the infectious period in some diseases, and how can the poor be expected to really see the necessity for these vexatious arrangements? How many of us would do so if we were in their place?

In fact, any effort to obtain, outside a hospital, complete isolation of patients of the labouring class, and of persons in contact with them, is likely, as a rule, to fall short of success, at any rate in the country—though I have known striking instances to the contrary. One small squatter's cottage I remember, in a populous hamlet, where scarlet fever was effectually confined to the four walls of it, thanks chiefly to the patience and obedience of the widow woman who, with her old father and four children (one being the patient) occupied the two little rooms. But it is only where the efforts of the medical advisers are thus loyally backed up that there is reasonable hope of preventing the spread of infection. And, as we have seen, the strain is so great, as a mere matter of convenience, that any addition to it, such as is caused by loss of work and consequent loss of income, endangers the whole system by causing carelessness and evasion.

This short description of the powers and duties of a Rural District Council, as Sanitary Authority, and of the manner in which they may be exercised and discharged in a non-Hospital District, with the difficulties arising in consequence, brings out two notable points in connection with outbreaks of infectious disease, viz. :—(1) The hardship sometimes inflicted, without sufficient compensation, upon infected

families of the poorer classes (especially where the breadwinner is not the patient), *for the public safety*, by treatment and precautions beyond what would be necessary for the personal benefit of such families; and (2) the consequent tendency to evasion and even concealment of the disease.

Nor is the hardship, for it is only too often a sad hardship, more willingly endured when the poor see that their well-to-do neighbours are apparently exempt from the restrictions imposed upon themselves. They do not always appreciate the difference between the possibilities of isolation in large and small houses, and find it difficult to understand why they are warned against going to work, while farmers with sick children go to market as usual, and even magistrates with scarlet fever in their homes are seen on the bench or at the coverside.

Let us now, still dealing with non-Hospital Districts, turn to the consideration of the subject from the point of view of the Poor Law. The main principle is perfectly simple. Guardians and their officers have nothing to do with infectious disease as such. If there is no destitution, they have nothing to do with infectious disease at all,—even the District Medical Officer is under no general obligation to attend a poor family suffering from infectious disease; his duty is confined to affording attendance and medicine whenever he may be lawfully required to do so by a written or printed order of the Board. (See Gen. Consld. Order, 24th July 1847, Article 206.) He is bound to notify to the Sanitary Authorities any occurrence of infectious disease among his pauper patients, but that is all. (Gen. Ord., 12th February 1847, Art. III.) If, on the other hand, there is destitution, then relief *must* be given.*

* For want of a clear understanding on this point a curious case recently occurred at Brentford, where a poor man whose need had been caused by infectious illness in his family was refused relief

And here the difficulties begin. For if the District Council, as Sanitary Authority, cannot legally make any grant towards the maintenance of a family whose income is diminished or destroyed by the operation of precautions prescribed for the protection of the community, it may very well happen, and does sometimes happen, that such a family will fall into destitution. And, in the result, that family may be forced to apply for Poor Law relief. In other words, a man who is willing and able to work may be made a pauper for the sake of the public safety. This is bad enough; but there is more in it still. For it is clear that there is only one kind of relief that can be offered. The offer of the workhouse is out of the question where the applicant's family is suffering from infectious disease. The only alternative is outdoor relief.

Now all this is open to objection on several grounds. In the first place, apart from the injustice of it, to make such a man and his family paupers at all is bad Poor Law policy. It tends to weaken the dislike of

by the Relieving Officer, on the ground that it was the duty of the Urban District Council to give any assistance that might be necessary; whereas the Council, when applied to, refused in their turn on the correct ground that they had no power to give more than medical necessities, and that the Guardians were bound to deal with the case. What became of the poor applicant perhaps some one will be able to tell us to-day.

The following extract from a letter of the Local Government Board, dated 14th February 1896, to a country Board of Guardians, is a clear statement of the law:—

“When a person suffering from infectious disease is destitute, it is the duty of the Guardians, or, in the interval between their meetings, of the Relieving Officer, to give such relief as the case requires, and, if necessary, to give an order for the admission of the patient to a hospital. Where, however, the patient is not destitute, and his removal to a hospital is only required for the purpose of isolation, the Guardians have no duty in the matter, and the Sanitary Authority should deal with the case. The test of the Guardians' duty in the matter is the destitution of the patient, although this will not necessarily depend upon his being in receipt of relief from the poor rates, but may consist in his being unable to obtain at his own cost the requisite medical attendance, nursing, and accommodation.”

pauperism, which we are all, I hope, anxious to strengthen. A readiness to accept Poor Law relief is itself an infectious disorder, only too communicable—and the contagion is more easily caught in the outdoor form than when the sufferer is treated with the antiseptic of the workhouse. Secondly, the grant of outdoor relief in such cases has a specific virus of its own. It introduces uncertainty into Poor Law administration; it blurs the line of qualification for ordinary outdoor relief. How can the poor, or any one else, see the consistency of giving outdoor relief in cases of some mild form of infectious disease, and withholding it in any case of ordinary sickness? A man whose wife is laid up by a confinement may well feel aggrieved that he too does not get help from the Board—and the Board may well think so too. And so we are in danger of drifting towards the old bad lines of the days when, in any emergency, the labourer would turn first to the Poor Law for assistance. Lastly, the thing cannot *work* well. No Poor Law relief ought to be granted without full investigation and constant supervision of the circumstances of the recipient. But it cannot be right that the Relieving Officer should make the proper and careful inquiry at the home of the applicant when that home is the seat of infectious disease. Either his inquiry will be perfunctory, or he will run risks which he ought not to run, both for himself and for those with whom he is afterwards brought in contact. In fact it is a faulty expedient. I am quite prepared to hear that my objections are all moonshine; that there is no real difficulty in any sensible Union where outdoor relief is habitually given; and that it is only in cruel Unions like Bradfield that any such questions could arise. Nothing would give me greater pleasure than to fight the outdoor relief battle once again on these lines. But I trust that the chairman will not allow me, or any one else, to bring about such a discussion. I prefer to base my

objection on the broader ground, which I am sure is common to all of us, that we ought, if possible, to avoid making a man a pauper at all whose necessity has been occasioned, not by his own acts or omissions, but solely by the operation of precautions taken in the interests of the public safety.

It remains to consider whether there is any other method of meeting these difficulties. The Local Government Board will tell you that the whole matter is perfectly familiar to them, and that there is only one satisfactory course open for adoption, viz., the establishment of Isolation Hospitals. Indeed, I may be thought, so far, to have been only piling up arguments leading to the advocacy of some such system.

It may be that Isolation Hospitals will some day be the proper remedy. I do not at all wish to take up a position of uncompromising hostility to them. In towns they must be almost a necessity ; but in the case of country districts, with which alone we are concerned, there is something to be said on both sides. Unfortunately there is, so far as I know, no recent full report upon the working of such establishments. It is true that in 1894 there was issued a very full report and papers on the "Use and Influence of Hospitals for Infectious Disease," submitted by the Board's Medical Officer, Dr Buchanan, containing reports by Dr Thorne and Mr Power, upon such hospitals all over the country. But the document is only a reprint of the appendix to the Local Government Board Report of 1880-81, and is therefore now seventeen or eighteen years old. It is full of valuable and interesting matter (especially Dr Thorne's general report) on the use and influence of such hospitals,* but it is not up to date. I confess that a careful and repeated study of it did not convince me

* See also Memorandum of Local Government Board relating to Infectious Diseases, December 1876.

that *for scattered rural districts* Isolation Hospitals are necessary as a means of prevention of infectious diseases. Certainly the results shown in it as regards such districts where such hospitals were in existence did not, for the too brief period covered by the report, show better results, as to number of cases, or death-rate, than our own District of Bradfield (where there has never been any Isolation Hospital), either for the corresponding period or for the subsequent years.

Having reason, however, to believe that in the opinion of the authorities the present working of the hospitals at Alcester (Warwickshire) and Hollingbourn (Kent) furnishes the best proof of the superiority of some such system in a country neighbourhood, I have recently visited both places. Some details will be found in Appendices III. and IV.; and I will only say here, that a comparison with Bradfield figures (see Appendix I.) does not even now, though perhaps the statistics are not even yet ripe,* seem to tell overwhelmingly in favour of the establishment of such hospitals, at any rate as regards the amount of disease; while there is no doubt which course is the least expensive. Looking at the matter, however, from a more general point of view, let me endeavour, as impartially as I can, to state the advantages and disadvantages of the Isolation Hospital system as applied to Rural Districts.

First, as to its advantages. To the extent that the inconveniences attaching to the presence of infectious disease are diminished by the existence of hospitals, the objection to the prompt calling in of the doctor in suspicious cases, and to the consequent notification, will be diminished also. There is no doubt that when once a patient is in a hospital, isolation can be secured effectively: for there is, or with proper discipline

* Statistics of this kind are, moreover, dependent upon other considerations, such as character of neighbourhood, system of management, &c. &c.

ought to be, no real danger of spreading infection, if the building has a sufficient clear space round it properly fenced in. Proper treatment can also be secured, and proper and sufficient maintenance afforded, without recourse to the Poor Law. Last, but not least, the breadwinner, where he is not the patient, will be set free to continue his work, if he allows the sufferer to be moved into the hospital; and if he does not, he will have lost his right to complain—the hospital acting as a kind of “Sanitary House Test.”

On the other hand, the disadvantages are worthy of consideration. Poor people do not always like to come, or send their children, into what they sometimes very erroneously call “pest houses.” Perhaps we should not, or our wives would not, always be anxious to part with our children when their lives were, or might soon be, in danger. This difficulty is said to be imaginary, and to be soon got over. No doubt the experience of Alcester and Hollingbourn is in favour of such a view; but there has been friction elsewhere between mothers and the authorities. Then there is the question of expense; a site is not always procurable, except upon fancy terms. The hospital may be empty for nine months out of twelve; all the better if it is. At Hollingbourn it has been so occasionally. Again there is difficulty in recovering the cost of maintenance, &c., from persons who ought to be able to pay. In Alcester and Hollingbourn no attempt is now made to do so. It may not be right to saddle such persons with greater costs than they would have had to bear if treated at home. But they ought to pay something; for surely one ought not to encourage the growth of a new hospital difficulty of this kind all over England; the London hospitals and their out-patient lists show how arduous a matter reform may be when once a lax system is in full swing.

Certain administrative difficulties need perhaps hardly be more than hinted at, as they are not

beyond prevention by good arrangement; still, for example, the avoidance of breaches of professional etiquette, without prejudicing the interests of patients, may not always be easy. It is not every doctor who would wish his patients carried off to a hospital some miles distant, and taken out of his hands; for, except where the distance is small, each case can scarcely be properly attended by its own doctor. And the question of distance is also of importance, as regards safe removal of patients, and as regards visits of inquiry by their friends. Again, in small hospitals, with intermittent use, the staff are not always easy to procure, or to keep, in a satisfactory state of efficiency. And there are possible difficulties about supervision of house-keeping, &c.

The real *crux* is whether the results are in fact so very good. The figures in the Appendices speak for themselves, and deserve some study; and I need only make the obvious remark, that in a scattered rural area where there is little disease, and that little occurring under circumstances admitting of fairly satisfactory home treatment, the hospital will not be much wanted at all; while, on the other hand, where there is a bad outbreak, the chances are that any hospital will soon prove too small.

The whole subject was considered recently in Bradfield by a joint-committee of the Guardians and Council. By their report, presented and adopted in December 1896, the establishment of a permanent central Isolation Hospital for the district was declared to be, at any rate at present, not desirable. They recommended, nevertheless, that an attempt should be made to provide, by way of experiment, temporary isolation accommodation for ordinary local cases on a small scale, upon the lines suggested by Dr Thorne in his official memorandum of September 1892 (and see sec. 14 of Isolation Hospitals Act, 1893), *i.e.*, by arranging beforehand for the use, in certain cases, of a

cottage or pair of cottages. As regards more serious outbreaks, they recommended that the Council should arrange to hire a site for an emergency hospital in a convenient situation. But they stated that, in their opinion, it was not advisable that a temporary hospital should be purchased before it was actually required. Pending the completion of these arrangements, and so far as they were not used, as regards expenses or loss incurred by poor persons in consequence of infectious disease in their families, the committee declared that the present practice of the Board and Council was the only legal course, viz.—

- (a.) Payment of *sanitary expenses* where lawful.
- (b.) Any other assistance to be afforded through the Poor Law.
- (c.) Inquiries as to the means of applicants to Guardians to be made by the Relieving Officer, who, however, should not enter infected houses.
- (d.) The Sanitary Inspector to give such information as he might possess to the Relieving Officer.

The provision of isolated cottage accommodation has not yet been found practicable, for the simple reason that no cottage, or pair of cottages, has yet been discovered which would be suitable for the purpose, and which the owner and occupier were willing to let. It may be that this difficulty will be overcome in the future; but the expedient has further difficulties of its own, even when this initial obstacle shall have been removed. The provision of a site for a temporary hospital in case of emergency is comparatively simple, and little remains to be done in this respect.*

* I may mention that the Bradfield District Council have recently declined to purchase a second-hand hospital tent, on favourable terms, on the ground that if any temporary movable hospital is provided it ought rather to be of iron, but that at present the need for buying one at all was not obvious. It is possible that if and when Reading

Having now reviewed all the different methods known to me of dealing with infectious disease, it remains to review the whole question with a view to some definite suggestions merely for the purpose of discussion.

Probably we shall all be pretty well agreed as to certain main points. We all want to secure prompt notification of cases—*i.e.*, that the medical man shall be called in at the earliest possible moment. We all desire that proper treatment as regards isolation, whether at home or in hospital, shall be applied in all cases with the least possible hardship, and under acknowledged legal powers; and that there shall be a reasonably uniform practice in respect of the period during which such isolation shall be enforced. And we must surely all be agreed that no recourse to the Poor Law ought ever to be necessary in the case of those whose need is solely occasioned by measures taken for the public safety.

To meet these points, I submit, with great diffidence, the following suggestions for discussion:—

(1.) That the fee payable to doctors upon notification by them be increased, with a view to making it their interest, more than it is at present, to *discover* and report cases of infectious disease.

(2.) That the increase of fee carry with it some responsibility as to medical treatment—*i.e.*, that the notifying doctor be bound to attend the patient, unless and until removed to hospital, any further payment, in exceptional cases, being left to the discretion of the Council.

takes up seriously the question of an Isolation Hospital for the town, arrangements may be made by which the neighbouring country districts shall be able, on payment, to send patients into it. But the charges will have to be below those lately made by a certain District Council, for two cases from an adjoining district on which occasions no less than £38 and £40 respectively had to be paid for the admission and treatment of such cases for six weeks, the hospital being opened on purpose each time.

(3.) That where local circumstances admit—*e.g.*, where the population is sufficiently dense—Isolation Hospitals should be tried, with or without the assistance of the County Council; but that it is unwise and unfair, even if not illegal, to entirely waive repayment of expenses from persons in a position to afford the same. It may be that in some places even small Cottage Hospitals would be the best form.*

(4.) That District Councils be empowered, under proper safeguards, to require such isolation as they may consider necessary of patients, or of members of their households; and that any breach of such requirement should be an offence punishable by law.†

(5.) That some standard periods of isolation for different diseases should be agreed upon, or (in the alternative) that Medical Officers of Health should accept the written certificate of a duly qualified doctor, in attendance, as to the time when isolation is no longer necessary.

(6.) That, at any rate where there is no Isolation Hospital, District Councils be empowered, under proper safeguards, to grant, if they think fit—(a) medical necessaries, (b) nursing, (c) maintenance for the patient or any other member of the household, or (d) lodging money, in any case where they are satisfied that the need for the same has been occasioned for the sake of the sanitary welfare of the community.

The safeguards above referred to might be found in making it illegal for Councils to make such requirements, or to afford such assistance, except upon the written recommendation of their Inspector, countersigned by the Medical Officer of Health, or by the doctor in attendance, or by both of them. And I see no reason why Councils should not be authorised to

* It has been suggested that as a preparatory measure, it would be a good thing to appoint a district nurse to visit and assist infectious cases at home, and to get known among the poor.

† Without some such provision as this it would be difficult to justify the permission to Councils to grant maintenance or lodging money.

give such assistance as is mentioned in paragraph 6 on loan, if it should appear to them expedient to do so.

The whole subject is full of difficulties, and I hope that the discussion will furnish fuller explanation of the practice and experience of local authorities than I have been able to obtain. One thing is, however, clear, that the present state of things sometimes involves a gross injustice to the poor, and a considerable risk to the proper administration of the Poor Law.

In conclusion, I venture to quote a few words from the report of the Bradfield joint-committee already mentioned:—

“The Committee feel justified in warning the Council—in the prevention of the common epidemics—not to expect very great results from the use of any of the means at their disposal. Whatever regulations may be enforced, it is to be remembered that we have imperfect knowledge of the nature and source of these diseases, imperfect advertisement of their appearance, and imperfect weapons with which to meet them. With such an equipment, we have to contend against much ignorance, carelessness, and a strong prejudice which is opposed to formal authority in these matters, a prejudice which will be much increased, and in some sense justified, by an unwise expenditure or needlessly stringent regulations on the part of the Council.”

However much we may strive to isolate and stamp out infectious diseases, we shall always be open to risk of imported cases. In these days of constant inter-communication between all parts of the country, and of continual movement of individuals from place to place within every district, it is impossible to be sure of complete protection. The growing practice, so beneficial in most respects, of transporting large batches of children from the great towns into the country for a summer holiday, is one of the sources of danger, and there are other factors. But this does not relieve us from the duty of doing our best. It is nevertheless true that the best hope of improvement lies in the gradual spread of sound opinion among the poor and among ourselves. Let us not, however, spoil our Poor Law administration, and inflict avoidable hardship in the meantime.

APPENDIX I.—Table of Figures relating to INFECTIOUS DISEASES in the area occupied in the BRADFIELD UNION, which since 1894 has been divided into the BRADFIELD and GORING RURAL DISTRICTS.—*N.B.* There is no Isolation Hospital.

	Notifications.					Deaths from "Infectious Diseases."					Corrected Total Deaths, all causes.	Corrected Death rate per 1000.	Population Estimated.	Inhabited Houses.	Acreage.	Rateable Value.
	S. Pox.	S. F.	Diph.	Entc.	Erys. &c.	Totul.	S. Pox.	S. F.	Diph.	Entc.	Erys. &c.					
1874 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3	1	1	16.50	15,880	3,362	-	107,365
1875 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	17.80	15,888	-	-	124,905
1876 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	2	2	1	15.70	15,896	-	-	128,776
1877 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	17	3	1	3	16.30	15,904	-	-	129,504
1878 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3	3	1	15.80	16,913	-	-	130,169
1879 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	1	1	18.00	16,922	-	-	132,608
1880 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	-	1	1	17.80	17,930	-	-	132,707
1881 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	1	1	15.20	17,972	3,608	-	133,237
1882 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	2	1	1	13.80	17,845	-	-	142,669
1883 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	3	2	3	18.10	17,972	-	-	136,704
1884 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1	-	2	15.20	18,547	-	-	135,625
1885 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	8	-	3	16.20	18,724	-	-	135,922
1886 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2	16.00	18,901	-	-	135,087
1887 -	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	3	1	15.60	19,078	-	-	134,224
1888, Building Bye-Laws	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	13.10	17,384	Part of Tilehurst transferred to Reading		133,652
1889, Notification Act adopted	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	1	12.40	17,543	-	-	128,623
1890 -	-	3	20	1	7	31	-	-	7	1	1	14.00	17,701	-	-	128,098
1891 -	-	6	3	-	4	13	-	-	-	1	-	17.50	18,017	-	-	136,514
1892 -	-	41	6	15	-	62	-	-	2	3	-	14.30	18,023	-	-	136,765
1893 -	-	89	7	9	10	115	-	-	2	-	2	12.60	18,387	-	-	137,252
1894, Oxon Parishes a separate Rural District	-	57	11	5	6	79	-	1	5	1	1	14.50 Oxon.	15,318	-	-	136,660
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	11.70 Berks.	3,233	-	-	-
1895 -	-	16	29	11	7	63	-	-	10	-	1	13.50 Oxon.	15,631	-	-	136,681
1896 -	Berks.	94	18	5	2	119	-	4	4	-	-	9.60	3,054	-	-	137,631

		Hospital or Non-Hospital.	1889 Notification Act Adopted or not.	Population Corrected.	Notifications.	Corrected Deaths from Notifiable Zymotic Diseases (excluding Puerperal Fever).
Newbury Rural -	-	No. Hospital.	-	11,239	-	6
Newbury Urban -	-	No. Hospital.	Yes.	10,302	26	4
Hungerford Rural	-	No. Hospital.	No.	10,446	-	7
Ramsbury Rural	-	No.	-	11,354	5*	4
Abingdon Rural -	-	No.	Yes.	16,980	-	6
Abingdon Urban	-	No.	-	9,554	47	2
Culham Rural -	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	-	Included in Hungerford Rural District.		
Wallingford Rural	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	Yes.	6,970	47	0
Wallingford Urban	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	-	13,516	-	4
Crowmarsh Rural	-	Pair of Cottages.	Yes.	9,270	41	1
Bradfield Rural -	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	-	5,678	-	0
Goring Rural -	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	Yes.	6,363	14	3
Cookham Rural -	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	-	Included in Abingdon Rural District.		
Maidenhead Urban	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	Yes.	2,638	19	2
Easthampstead Rural -	-	Site selected.	-	11,212	-	10
Windsor Rural -	-	Site for Emergency selected.	Yes.	6,234	62	2
Egham Rural -	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	-	2,591	-	2
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	Yes.	2,957	46	1
	-	Site selected.	-	Included in Wallingford Rural District.		
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	Yes.	5,066	40	6
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	-	18,901	-	11
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	Yes.	15,744	118	8
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	-	Included in Bradfield Rural District.		
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	Yes.	3,138	23	3
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	-	8,806	-	1
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	Yes.	10,474	29	10
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	-	9,210	-	2
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	No.	11,745	17*	9
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	-	13,305	-	8
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	Yes.	13,660	50	5
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	-	21,852	-	14
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	Yes.	13,614	35	4
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	-	Included in Windsor Rural District.		
	-	No. (Now agreed on.)	Yes.	10,568	30	3

* NOTE.—These figures must not be taken to represent the number of attacks that would have been notified if the Notification Act had been in operation at these two places, but only those of which information was obtained in one way or other.

APPENDIX III.

FACTS AND FIGURES RELATING TO
ALCESTER ISOLATION HOSPITAL.

The area served by the Hospital includes the Alcester and Feckenham Rural Districts (Warwickshire and Worcestershire respectively).

	Acreage.	Population, 1891.	Rateable Value, 1896.
Alcester Rural District	36,655	11,410	£55,923
Feckenham Rural District	15,642	5,744	24,313
	52,297	17,154	£80,236

The Hospital comprises two sets of buildings, viz.—two blocks of wooden structures on brick piers, erected 1875; and one larger brick and tile-roof hospital, with separate brick-house for matron, &c., erected 1885; the whole standing in 1 acre of land, nearly opposite the Workhouse, and about 150 yards from it, on the outskirts of Alcester. The total number of beds is 46, of which 10 are in the new building. The management is by a joint committee of the Alcester and Feckenham Rural District Councils.

The original cost of the *old Hospital* (see Supplement, reprinted 1894, to Tenth Annual Local Government Board Report, 1880-81) appears to have been as follows, viz.—

Site (rent-free)	-	-	-	-	...	
Buildings	-	-	-	-	£453	1 8
Furniture and fittings			-	-	124	11 9
Fly, for ambulance	-	-	-	-	9	10 0
Total, paid out of Rates	-	-	-	-	£587	3 5

The annual cost of maintenance is stated in the above Report to have been—

In 1879 (year ending September)	-	-	£573	10 0
In 1880 do.	-	-	384	15 0

The *new Hospital* was erected by public subscription, as a memorial of the late Lord Hertford, at the following cost, viz.—

Site (given freehold by the present Lord Hertford)	-	-	-	...
Buildings and furniture, &c.	-	-	-	£1,200 0 0
				£1,200 0 0

The annual cost of maintenance of the entire establishment, including old and new Hospitals and matron's house, for 1887, 1888, and 1889, is thus stated by Dr Jephcott, M.O.H.—

1887	-	-	-	-	-	£339	12	11
1888	-	-	-	-	-	220	14	10
1889	-	-	-	-	-	172	4	2

These sums appear to include—

	1888.	1889.
Provisions and necessities	£113 6 4	£88 17 10
Medical attendance	31 14 0	13 0 0
Management	22 10 0	25 1 4
Matron's and attendant's salaries	53 4 6	45 5 0
	£220 14 10	£172 4 2

But *not* to include clerk's salary (as clerk to joint-committee); printing, stationery, &c.; rates and taxes; insurance; repairs; and, probably, not horse hire and driver for ambulance, at 9d. per mile.

It appears that the matron now receives £30 per annum (no beer), and one attendant £16 per annum.

The Hospital is open all the year round.

Nurses are engaged as required.

The medical attendance in the Hospital is almost entirely by two Alcester doctors.

There is no charge made to patients; nor to the Union for paupers.

Relations may visit, but only look through the windows.

There is no spread of infection from the Hospital.

People use it willingly; and all infectious cases that can be moved are brought to it, from distances up to nine miles.

The "ambulance" is an old waggonette, with an omnibus cover, stripped of linings; comfort being secured by blankets and hot bottles. This answers perfectly well. Infants and young children travel in it safely.

There is little or no wilful concealment of infectious disease.

Claims for compensation for loss of work never arise; if it is advisable to keep a person from work, a small payment may be made, which the Council pass, and to which the auditor does not object.

The Notification Act is in force.

The Hospital is believed to have been most useful in nipping outbreaks in the bud.

ALCESTER ISOLATION HOSPITAL.
Admissions and Deaths in Hospital.

	Admissions.					Deaths	
	S. Sx	S. F.	Diph.	Typh.	Total.		
1875	41	6	—	—	47	2	First Hospital opened in consequence of outbreak of Smallpox.
1876	—	37	—	—	37	2	
1877	—	30	10	—	40	1	
1878	—	108	5	—	113	4	
1879	—	35	—	—	35	1	
1880	—	85	—	—	85	10	
1881	—	15	—	—	15	—	
1882	—	24	4	—	28	1	
1883	3	14	3*	—	20	1	
1884	2	20	—	—	22	2	New Hospital opened.
1885	—	114	—	—	114	4	
1886	—	147	—	—	147	3	
1887	—	60	1	1	62	2	
1888	—	21	13	—	34	—	
1889	2	19	6	—	27	—	
1890	2	53	1	—	56	2	
1891	13	61	—	4	78	—	
1892	4	69	3	—	76	2	
1893	11	149	—	—	160	1	
1894	3	56	4	—	63	1	
1895	1	36	19	1	57	—	
1896	—	146	3	—	149	1	

* German measles.

APPENDIX IV.

FACTS AND FIGURES RELATING TO HOLLINGBOURN ISOLATION HOSPITAL.

The area served by the Hospital is Hollingbourn Rural District.

Acreage - - -	57,624
Population (1891) -	13,318 (apparently decreasing)
Rateable value (1896)	£84,035

The Hospital buildings are of brick, roofed with slate, and were erected about ten years ago (say 1887), on 1 acre of (freehold) ground,

in a lonely situation, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the workhouse and station. They comprise (a) a hospital block containing one ward for scarlet fever cases with ten beds, one ward for smallpox with seven beds, and a few children's beds can be made up if necessary; (b) a caretaker's house, detached; (c) a small block containing laundry, ambulance house, mortuary, pump-house, and coals, also detached. There is also a small furnace destructor.

The management is by a committee of the Rural District Council.

The original cost seems to have been as follows, viz. :—

Purchase of site - - - - -	£101
Erection of Hospital block, including Care- taker's House - - - - -	2,118
Furnishing - - - - -	224
Sinking of well - - - - -	126
Purchase of ambulance (say) - - - - -	69
Fencing and incidentals - - - - -	153
Total - - - - -	£2,791

The annual cost of maintenance cannot be given with any accuracy, the Hospital being altogether closed for long periods, though it is always ready to be opened on the order of the Medical Officer of Health. The following items may be noted, however, viz. :—

A. *Regular payments*, whether Hospital is full or empty—

- (a.) Doctor's salary (workhouse medical officer) £40 0 0
- (b.) Caretaker (15s. per week) - - - 39 0 0
With coals and light in addition.
- (c.) Insurance, rates, taxes, and repairs, &c. (say) 10 10 0

B. When there are patients in the Hospital—

- (a.) The caretaker's wife is paid 14s. per week. For this she does the cooking and scrubbing.
- (b.) Both she and husband receive rations.
- (c.) The washing is paid for separately.
- (d.) The horse hire for ambulance is contracted for at 15s. per journey, long or short.
- (e.) Nurses are engaged as may be required, at £2. 2s. per week per nurse.
- (f.) Provisions, &c., for patients and nurses (all ordered through the clerk).

There is no charge made to patients, nor to the Union for paupers.

Relations may visit, but only look through the windows.

There is no spread of infection from the Hospital.

People use it willingly ; and all infectious cases that can be moved are brought in, except that it is not advised where the cottage stands alone and there are no children. At first there was some objection, but now very rare.

Distances up to ten miles.

The ambulance is a good, specially-constructed vehicle, holding two stretchers.

There is not much concealment of disease. The difficulty of proving "wilful neglect" makes convictions difficult. There is the usual carelessness.

There are no claims for compensation for loss of work. The offer of the Hospital is considered to meet this.

The usual period of isolation is six or seven weeks, as the doctor in attendance may think right.

The Notification Act is in force.

The Hospital is believed to have checked outbreaks at the outset.

HOLLINGBOURN ISOLATION HOSPITAL.

Admissions and Deaths in Hospital.

Admissions.					Deaths.	Periods during which there were no Patients in Hospital.
	Smallpox.	S. Fever.	Typhoid.	Total.		
1890	—	29	—	29	1	{ Mid. June to mid. Nov.
1891	—	—	—	—	—	Whole year.
1892	2	60	—	62	—	{ Jan. to mid. July ; Sept. 9 to Dec. 21.
1893	—	10	—	10	—	Jan. 1 to Nov. 13.
1894	2	15	—	17	1	May 29 to Sept. 4.
1895	1	4	—	5	—	{ Jan. 29 to July 13 ; Oct. 26 to Dec. 31.
1896	—	—	—	—	—	Whole year.
1897*	—	17	1	18	—	July 23 to Sept. 13.

* To Nov. 13, 1897.

Note.—These figures appear to be not fully indicative of the actual amount of infectious disease in the district. There are no printed reports. The Medical Officer of Health, however, kindly supplied the following list of *Notifications* during the year 1896, namely :—

Smallpox, 0 ; *Scarlet Fever*, 7 ; *Diphtheria*, 41 ; *Enteric*, 1 ;
Erysipelas, 18 ; *Puerperal*, 0.

It should be noted that the Hospital is not supposed to be used for anything but smallpox and scarlet fever.

DISCUSSION.

Rev. C. E. FEW (Sevenoaks) said he must ask those present to forgive him for speaking to them that day. It was the first occasion upon which he had had the honour of addressing the Conference, although he had had considerable experience of Poor Law work, having been for twenty-three years a member of Sevenoaks Board of Guardians, and the democratic Act which had been mentioned by the President put him into the chair, and from that time to the present he had had the honour and pleasure of presiding over one of the most useful and harmonious Boards of Guardians in the County of Kent. As a clergyman he had had to superintend a fight against an epidemic in his parish. He wished to impress upon those present two or three points—first, that to stamp out an epidemic it must be dealt with at once; to do this an expeditious system of notification was indispensable. He had known a case where a nurse was sent to an outdoor patient who was dead upon her arrival. The reason was that the doctor sent the notification to the inspector by the night post; the inspector was away from home, and it was not until the third day that he got the notice. Medical men ought to have instructions to telegraph from the nearest post office the moment they spotted an infectious case. Many of those present that day were London men, and could not realise the great areas and districts that their work in the country ranged over, but in most cases a medical man could send the telegram within half an hour, and in that way they would be doing all they could to check the disease. Then again, as a clergyman, he felt the extremely difficult position they were in in regard to the funeral of those who died of infectious diseases. Many and many a time he had persuaded people not to compel him to take the coffin and those various friends, who always turned up at the death, but would not visit during the lifetime, into the church where, perhaps, on the following day there would be a congregation of healthy people. It should be compulsory on the clergyman not to admit the coffins in infectious cases to be taken into the church, but direct to the grave, where a very proper service could be held. It was difficult to prevent it, unless the clergyman was backed up by orders. Prevention is better than cure, and it was important that Guardians should see that the overseers did their work well, and that the inspectors were eyes, ears, and nose to the Board; and let the Board see that the inspectors' reports were carried out. He often obtained information himself, and when he did he did not hesitate to tell the inspector. Few of them knew half the tyranny and difficulty there was about reporting such matters. A tenant dare not say that his water supply was inadequate. Once when he pointed out that particular defect, the answer was, "We would rather have the houses empty." He replied, "Then have them empty, and do away with a possible centre of infection." (Cheers.) He did not care how much

any one threatened him, and Guardians generally must have the courage of their opinions, and insist upon the inspector really doing his duty. They must not favour one man and be hard upon another. He resided in the neighbourhood of Maidstone, and during the epidemic he visited and inspected the fever hospitals and also the Barming County Lunatic Asylum. In the asylum there were eighty poor people down with the disease, and in the hospitals in the town he was shown into many wards where there were five and twenty children and middle-aged people down with the disease. It was a most distressing sight, but he felt that it was incumbent upon him to investigate the epidemic and learn what he could to safeguard his own district. (Cheers.) In his own neighbourhood he had taken care to have all the wells properly inspected, and to see that dairy work was carried on under healthy conditions. Typhoid was not communicable in the milk; it was conveyed in the water which was used for washing the utensils. It was important, therefore, to see that the water was pure. The typhoid germ would not live in a cow, although it would in a pig. He never made such an assertion without being certain of its accuracy, and he had it upon the authority of his friend, the medical officer for his district. Every district ought to be prepared. Maidstone had done all it could to meet the calamity. He entirely agreed with the Chairman that the Local Government Board had run them very hard, and their requirements were of a terribly exacting character. He (the speaker) went into the wards at Maidstone, and what did he find? Schoolrooms and such buildings utilised as hospitals, and yet the mortality did not exceed 14 per cent. of the cases. If that could be done, why should the Local Government Board interfere with them in the way it did? The opinions of those who personally met and dealt with these epidemics ought to be respected and listened to. (Hear, hear.) A few years ago in his district they were going to have a great central hospital. It was to cost for site, £1,000; buildings, £5,000; or in all £6,000, to which must be added the cost of staff, and that with the payment of interest and capital meant about £300 a year, for which they were to have twelve beds. Accommodation for six men and six women in a Union of seventeen parishes! That was not very liberal provision. He had devised a plan whereby the district would have three hospitals instead of one, and accommodation for thirty-six patients at about £100 a year. (Hear, hear.) He was going to ask three landowners in three different parts of the district to build him a cottage (at 5 per cent. on their outlay) to take twelve patients. Those cottages could be built at about £500 each, £25 per cent., or for the three £75 a year. Put the hospitals in different parts of the district, where each case could have its own doctor. The more popular they made these places the more ready the people would be to avail themselves of them when the time came. Everybody would be attended by his own doctor, or the parish or club doctor, and there would be no medical expenses at

all. It would be said that people objected to give their ground as sites for fever hospitals. He did not wonder at it where it was purchased out and out for the purpose. He suggested that the site and buildings should be held on a three, five, or seven years' tenancy, and so enable an owner to remove them if necessary, and not let him feel that he was damned in a particular spot for ever and a day. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. F. CLUTTERBUCK (Abingdon), speaking, not as chairman of the Board of Guardians, but as the chairman of the Culham Rural District Council, said that that was a small district of only ten parishes, where they had carried out the very suggestion that the previous speaker had made. They had an opportunity of getting hold of two modern-built cottages in the centre of a heath. The whole population of the district was only about two thousand. The landlord let the two cottages to the Council at £13 a year, who had been the tenants now for about nine months. They employed an old woman, who lived a short distance away in another isolated cottage, to look after the cottages and keep them aired. Until lately they had had no case, but it happened the other day that the schoolmaster of the village returned home, and his child, after he had been back two days, was certified as suffering from scarlet fever. The child was at once taken to the hospital, and a nurse was obtained from London. If the child had remained with her friends the infection might have spread further; as it was, they were able to stop it at once. He thought that the suggestion made by the previous speaker was much the most feasible one for country districts. It could be carried out with ease and very little expense, and would do all that was necessary. As the last speaker remarked, it was a great thing for people to have their regular doctor. His Council retained the doctor of the district at a fixed fee, and he undertook to attend all the cases which it might from time to time be necessary to send to the hospital. It was quite true that most of these diseases in country districts were imported, but when they got a foothold they very soon spread; and they had had cases a few years ago that were practically due to the want of an isolation hospital; and it used to be weeks and months before they could say that a district was thoroughly clear of disease. Their neighbouring district of Abingdon was going to try a scheme on a much larger scale, and invited his district to join them, but they had already started the scheme, which he had outlined that day, and they decided to stick to it. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs EVANS (Strand, London) said her reason for rising was a remark in Mr Willink's paper, that people who could afford to pay for what they received in hospital ought to do so. But Mr Willink, not being a member of a London Board, was perhaps not aware that in the new Act no provision was made that those who could pay for treatment in the Metropolitan Asylums Board Hospitals should pay. It made her feel, she hardly knew how, to hear of a site costing £1,000, and buildings £5,000, when one single bed in

London cost £500—(a voice: £800)—£800, she supposed that that member meant Brook Hospital. (A voice: Yes.) She wanted to be moderate, and to be well within the mark. As soon as a medical man in London entered a house and found infectious disease, he communicated with the authorities, and the patient was removed to a hospital. From an experience of some twelve years of Poor Law work, she said there seemed to be a feeling now that there was no disgrace in coming on other people to maintain your offspring. Now, the Metropolitan Asylums Hospitals were responsible for a great deal of that feeling. Persons possessed of carriages did not object to enter the Asylums Board Hospitals, and they were wise not to object, for everything was prepared for them on the most lavish scale. She had not discovered one single case where, since 1891, man, woman, or child had paid back one single farthing of the expense of their treatment in the Asylums Board Hospitals.

Mr MURRAY BROWNE (Local Government Board Inspector) said that the charge which the first speaker brought against the Local Government Board would not apply to his own department. Most schemes would not be quite as costly as the one to which Mr Few took exception. He (the speaker) hoped that the scheme now suggested would be a success, but he was not very sanguine about it. However, if they could follow the example of Culham, by all means let them do so. It was extremely difficult to get cottages. He had a strong view that arrangements of some sort for the provision of isolation hospitals were necessary. Isolation hospitals were absolutely necessary in urban and semi-urban districts, and it was such districts that they must consider, for, unfortunately, there were places like Culham and Bradfield still to be found. He would be sorry for any one to go away from that Conference thinking that isolation hospitals were not necessary for urban and semi-urban districts. These hospitals were not under the control of the Local Government Board, or any other Government Department; they were left very much to themselves, and there was a great possibility of serious abuses springing up. There should be always a medical superintendent, not necessarily resident, in a small district—it was absurd to talk about that—but some medical man who should be held responsible for the management of the hospital. (Hear, hear.)

Mr W. BROWN (Lewisham) said he quite agreed that there should be one medical man, and only one, responsible for the management of an infectious hospital. It would be a dangerous proceeding to have a number of doctors going in and out of the same hospital. It would be well if they could arrange in country districts for one doctor to have exclusive control. General practitioners going from one house to another would be a source of infection. As to Mrs Evans's observation about payment for treatment, those ideas were very good but a trifle sentimental. Did not the well-to-do classes pay large rates, and surely they have the same right to go or send their children as those who paid little or nothing in rates?

CANON PHILLIPS (Epsom) said that his experience of many years would be able to add very little to what had been put forward by the previous speakers. He was very much taken with the idea of the Chairman of the Sevenoaks Board, of having a number of small hospitals studded about a Union. That might be beneficial in small Unions, but it would not be practicable in the large ones. (Hear, hear.) In his Union there were two or three very large parishes, such as Sutton, where there were twelve or thirteen thousand people, and it would be perfectly impossible for small hospitals to embrace all the cases which might by chance occur in such a district. They had, therefore, built a large hospital which would, he hoped, prove adequate to the requirements of the district. Such hospitals were for the benefit of the poor, whose household accommodation was often very meagre, and if the rich would drive up in their carriages, they ought to contribute towards the cost of the benefits which they thus derived. It was perfectly true, as the last speaker said, that the well-to-do paid largely in rates, but if they treated the infectious cases at home there would be the expenses of doctor and nurse, and it was not unfair to ask them to contribute what it otherwise would have cost them. In fact, it was only right and proper and just. (Hear, hear.) The Chairman of the Sevenoaks Board, as a clergyman, was very much exercised in mind as to how to keep certain funerals out of his church. He (the speaker) had always kept the coffins out of his church, in infectious cases, and if Mr Few would do the same he would find that the majority of the parishioners would be very much obliged to him. (Hear, hear.)

MR JAMES RICHARDS (Whitchurch, Hants) said that in their little Union they believed that isolation hospitals were very necessary, and that the Boards that did not possess them were far behind the times. The Board were ordered to put a high wall round the hospital, but they did not believe such a wall was necessary in rural districts, and they did not put it up. (Hear, hear.) The hospital had been used by the upper ten and the lower ten with great advantage, and the well-to-do had given very liberally towards the expenses. There must surely be more liberality in the country than in the towns, for their own chairman had just given £200 in aid of the hospital. There were only eight parishes in the district, and the hospital contained eight beds, and was so designed that they could enlarge it if necessary. There was a nurse, who resided in the precincts of the hospital with her husband. The parish doctor attended the cases at a slight extra fee.

ADMIRAL WODEHOUSE (Maidenhead) desired to say one word. The notification of disease was the most essential thing. He had the misfortune to reside in a district where the Act was in force in one half but not in the other. It was most important to urge upon the Government the desirability of making the adoption of the Notification Act compulsory. (Hear, hear.)

MR C. MORLAND (Croydon) said that the question of pay-

ment for treatment in the fever hospitals was not so simple as it might seem to be. It was all important to deal with the cases promptly, and if the question arose whether a person was to pay or not to pay, there would be considerable delay, and half the advantage of the hospitals would be lost. Therefore it was good policy to receive the patients without payment. No doubt it was occasionally possible to have beds to which richer people might send their cases.

Mr BALDWIN FLEMING (Local Government Board Inspector) said that he might perhaps remove some misapprehensions. The whole of the arguments addressed to the Conference that day were arguments in favour of isolation hospitals, and that was very satisfactory to him at all events. Any such schemes as that which had been mentioned that day would be watched with the greatest interest by the Local Government Board, who would not discourage anything which Guardians initiated on their own resources. But when it came to the question of a loan, the Local Government Board had to see that the money was expended so as to benefit not only the present generation but those who came after them. Then, again, there appeared to be a great misconception as to what they had to pay. They did not have to pay the whole cost of sites and buildings. They, and those who came after them, had to bear the expense, and they only paid as long as they were ratepayers, and only for the particular requirements of their own districts. The Local Government Board had to insist upon effective isolation. They could not isolate various diseases in the same building without grave risk, and that risk the Local Government Board had to guard against. When they had an isolation hospital, the object ought to be to get infectious cases conveyed there as soon as possible. Every minute they lost was most valuable time wasted, and might give opportunities for the spread of infection, and thus defeat the very purpose for which the hospitals existed. How could a man know how much it was going to cost him when he entered an isolation hospital? A man might be perfectly well able to pay for a short stay, but not for a long one, and the bare idea of payment would carry with it an anxiety which it was most desirable to avoid, and it would also lead to concealment. The cost of isolation hospitals was really a premium which they paid for the insurance of the public health; and that was the only fair and sound way of looking upon it. How much cheaper it was to pay in that way than to bear the cost of an epidemic. Then, again, on the question of doctors. It had been said, and to those who had not studied the question it was specious enough, that it was much better to have a special doctor than to have the patients' own medical attendants going in and out of the hospital. Supposing he (the speaker) had an infectious disease, he had great confidence in his own doctor, and he would not go into an isolation hospital if he knew he would have to be attended by a stranger. (Hear, hear.) Then, again, there was very much more risk of doctors carrying infection if they attended infectious cases in private houses than if

they did so in a properly equipped isolation hospital. It was desirable to make isolation hospitals as popular as they could, and to hold out every inducement to people to go into them. He was perfectly astonished to hear Mr Willink call a modern isolation hospital a pest-house. It seemed to him to be an absolute misconception of the position. [Mr WILLINK : I did not call it a pest-house. I said that the poor sometimes look upon it as such.] He was very glad to have brought out that disclaimer. (Hear, hear.) Though probably a large number of people died under the old pest-house system, it showed that our forefathers understood the principles upon which to treat infectious disorders. People went into isolation hospitals, first of all because it removed a very terrible danger to those who were nearest and dearest to them ; and secondly, because there they could get every appliance and kind of treatment, which in most cases were wholly wanting in their homes. They must remember also this point, that now, with the Infectious Diseases Notification Act, a knowledge of the presence of infectious disease reached the proper authorities at the earliest possible moment, and in the early stages of such diseases there was really no danger in removing a patient considerable distances, showing that there was very little weight in the theory that these hospitals should be studded about over a district. (Hear, hear.)

Mr DOMVILLE (Exeter), who was invited by the Chairman to state what was done in his district, said that at Exeter they had a hospital with seventy beds, and they worked in harmony with the rural districts around the city, and admitting patients from those districts at a fixed and moderate charge of half-a-crown a week for bed-rent, and in addition a share of the actual cost according to the number of patients in the hospital at the time. It was, in his opinion, impossible that cottages could ever meet the requirements of rural districts for the treatment of infectious diseases. There had been occasionally typhoid, scarlet fever, smallpox, and other diseases, in the hospital all at one time, but fortunately in different wards ; and unless a hospital was capable of giving separate accommodation for each disease, it could not be regarded as adequate to the requirements of a district. With regard to the staff, their hospital was worked by the District Medical Officers of Health, who took a month's duty in turn, and who were well known to the poor. He might add that the hospital was in telephonic communication with the district offices and the police station, and inquiries as to the condition of the patient could be made by that means, and a deal of anxiety, as well as the danger of visiting, was thus avoided. He did not believe in increasing the fee for notification ; it was often an obstacle to the adoption of the Act. They ought to urge the authorities to insist on the adoption of the Notification Act all over the country. The cost of isolation hospitals was a species of insurance. If there was any charge made for admission, it would increase the difficulty of working the system, and tend to cause disease to be spread. It

often happened that to avoid trouble and expense domestic servants were sent home as soon as they were thought to be suffering from an infectious disease, and in that way disease was carried into country districts. There should be no charge for treatment in the isolation hospital.

Mr DOWN (Lewisham) said they were altogether too much under the thumb of the Local Government Board. This was his first term as a Guardian, and he did not submit to the dictates of the Local Government Board so easily as some of his friends seemed to do. The people near at hand must be the best judges of what was wanted in the way of hospital and other accommodation; and they had not only to find the wisdom for the management of local affairs, but also to find the money. It was all very well to be told they must do certain things by gentlemen who knew nothing whatever about the trouble of raising the money. It was grossly extravagant to spend £700 or £800 per bed. [The Chairman pointed out that the question was the treatment of infectious diseases in country districts.] He knew his remarks would not be very pleasantly received. (Order.) He knew nothing about country districts; but he was in favour of those who could pay paying for what they had in the hospitals. At Lewisham such people paid from 7s. to 21s. weekly, according to ability.

Rev. HENRY PALMER (Thakeham, Sussex) said that the Sussex County Council had carried out a great work in diffusing information about infectious diseases and their treatment. In West Sussex County Council lectures were given on health in the home, and they had been very well received. That was a valuable assistance in the treatment of these cases. There were also classes for instruction in sick nursing. The ignorance and prejudice that had prevailed in the past were thus being dispelled, and he hoped from what he had heard that day that cottage isolation hospitals would be established in the near future.

Rev. E. E. CRAKE (Eastbourne) said that in the Eastbourne Union there had long been provision for infectious cases, but he had seen the absolute necessity for isolation in the country districts. He was vicar of a country parish, and he knew the misery of having to deal with an infectious patient in a house in which there were perhaps only two bedrooms. Consequently on his Board he used his utmost endeavours to get a sanitary hospital erected. They purchased a piece of land, with a house, for £1,300, and the cost of the hospital buildings brought the whole cost up to £4,000; but a portion of the property was let by the Board, and produced £60 a year. Though their total expenditure had not been very heavy, they had provided for all the emergencies which were likely to arise in the district. Their hospital had been described as the most perfectly equipped institution of the kind in Sussex. Disease was often taken into country districts by the children who were sent from the large towns by the well-meaning efforts of people who seemed to

take little or no care as to the sanitary condition either of the districts from which the children came, or to which they were to be sent for a week or a fortnight. The allowance of 5s. per child for maintenance during such holidays was also quite inadequate. [The Chairman said he could not allow the point to be discussed.]

Mr C. CREMER (Faversham, Kent) said that one of the chief safeguards against the spread of infectious disease was to have thoroughly efficient sanitary inspectors. Isolation hospitals were exceedingly useful; and if the Local Government Board believed that a local authority was really aiming at isolation, it helped them in every possible way.

The CHAIRMAN said he thought that the Conference owed a debt of gratitude to Mr Willink for the valuable information he had given them in his paper. (Hear, hear.) The discussion had been a very practical one. The same system was not applicable to all parts of the country, and the value of the discussion consisted in the extent to which Guardians attempted to adopt the various systems to their respective districts. He asked the Conference to join in a cordial vote of thanks to Mr Willink. (Cheers.)

Mr BRAITHWAITE (Epsom), in seconding, wished to couple with it thanks to the Local Government Board Inspectors for their presence that day. (Hear, hear.)

The vote of thanks having been carried with acclamation,

Mr WILLINK, in reply, said he wished to associate himself with the vote of thanks to the Inspectors of the Local Government Board. Many urban questions had been raised, of which he must not take any notice, as the paper was a country paper. The general opinion expressed that day seemed in favour of isolation hospitals even in country districts if at all crowded. He would ask all those who read the paper to pay particular attention to the appendices of the paper; they dealt with many of the points raised during the discussion. The whole point of his argument, if there was any argument at all, against isolation hospitals was, that whereas they in Bradfield had never had isolation hospitals at all, still their record of health compared very favourably with those districts in which hospitals had been provided. When a district of 18,000 people could show that during 1896 there were only 119 cases of infectious disease in the whole district—in 1895, only 63; in 1894, only 79; in 1893, 115; in 1892, only 62; in 1891, 13; and in 1890, 31—it was a very good record indeed, and an overwhelming case had not been made out why they should change their system at Bradfield. The little isolation hospital at Hollingbourn struck him as being managed on a very good system. It was quite isolated, and had accommodation for about twenty patients. A caretaker resided in the precincts of the hospital to keep the place in proper condition for use when it was wanted, at a wage of 15s. a week all the year round, with lodgings and fuel and light. When a case came in the caretaker's wife got 14s. a week and rations, and had to do the charing and cooking, and

a trained nurse was called in. In that way the difficulties which had sometimes arisen as to supervision were surmounted as well as they possibly could be. He was sorry that nothing had been said about compensation for persons who suffered for the public safety. The whole question of what payments could be made by Guardians in these cases was in a very unsatisfactory state. District Councils had no power to pay home nursing, maintenance, lodging money, or compensation; but it was notorious that they paid indirectly, and that was a very unsatisfactory state of things. Either they ought to have isolation hospitals and use them properly, or they ought to have power to compensate people. Payments were made for clothing and bedding destroyed in excess of the true value, and to relatives for nursing patients, and that was most demoralising. The individual should never be made a pauper or put to private expense for the public good; nor ought he to make a profit out of it. Persons should contribute according to ability towards the cost of the treatment they received in the isolation hospital.

In reply to Mr Chance (Hon. Sec.), Mr WILLINK stated that the hospital at Hollingbourne was about a mile from the workhouse, and that its farthest distance from any point of the Union was ten miles.

At the afternoon session,

The first business was the election of three members to serve on the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences. The Chairman, Mr W. Bousfield, Colonel Sparks (Surrey), and Mr H. G. Willink (Berks), were the old members, and the Chairman intimated that he would not offer himself for re-election.

After a show of hands, the Chairman announced that Mr Willink (Bradfield, Berks) and the Rev. C. E. Few (Sevenoaks, Kent) were elected for the country districts; and Mr Milligan, of the Wandsworth and Clapham Board, for the Metropolis.

The election of the Committee of Management of the South-Eastern Conference was then carried out.

Mr Vallance (Whitechapel), Mr Allen (St Pancras), and Mr Brown (Lewisham), were re-elected for London.

General Shaw-Kemball, Mr Adam Stigant (old members), and the Rev. C. E. Few were elected for Kent.

Miss Brodie Hall, the Rev. R. B. Hooper, and Mr F. Tuppenny were re-elected for Sussex.

Mr W. Bravington, the Rev. Canon Phillips, and Colonel Sparks were re-elected for Surrey.

Mr J. P. King, Mr A. Tull, and Mr Willink were re-elected for Berkshire.

Mr W. Holding and Mr F. M. E. Jervoise were re-elected for Hampshire, with the addition of Mr Palin, of the Portsea Island Board, in whose favour Mr E. E. French had withdrawn.

The following Papers were then read :—

MAINTENANCE BY RELATIVES.

BY REV. B. H. ALFORD,

Guardian of the Poor, St Marylebone.

THIS principle of English law was formulated as early as 43 Elizabeth, when it was ordered that "Justices of the Peace shall assess the father and grandfather, and the mother and grandmother, and the children of every poor, old, lame, and impotent person, unable to work, for such person's relief and maintenance—the relative being of sufficient ability—on penalty of 20s. for every month of failure therein." The *husband's* obligation was, I suppose, considered inherent in the marriage relation; I do not find it legally stated until 4 & 5 William IV., and then rather by inference than directly.

The law of Elizabeth goes back for historical justification, if it needs any, to the practice of Christian relief at Ephesus in the first century of our era, when it was ordered, "if any widow have children or grandchildren, let them learn first to show piety towards their own family, and to requite their parents." It has ethical justification in the belief that every household is an indivisible unit, that elder and younger members must hold together, and that the State can only wisely help those who help themselves to the extent of their common ability.

This is the law, briefly stated, which Guardians are set to administer, and which the Local Government Board, in their memorandum of February 1878, desires should be more generally observed. Upon them devolves a fourfold duty—first, to seek out relatives; secondly, to inquire into their circumstances; thirdly, to determine what each can suitably contribute; lastly, to put in motion, when necessary, the machinery to compel the payment determined upon.

My Board in St Marylebone hold that this particular part of their Relief Committee's work is

important and educational ; that if relatives are resolutely brought face to face with their legal duties, to remove or abate chargeability, others, or they themselves on another occasion, may be induced to prevent chargeability arising at all. So our administration is what may be termed strict, and its details are in outline as follows :—

I. CONCERNING HUSBANDS.—No wife is allowed to remain in the House without search after the husband, if he be capable and at large ; when found, he is ordered to remove her at once. Should the wife be sick, and the husband's circumstances slender, she may be admitted by a doctor's order to the infirmary ; then the husband comes before the Committee at their next meeting that he may make an offer towards her support. Should he allege unfaithfulness as barring her claim upon him, this is generally considered a point for the magistrate to decide, and is referred to him ; should the husband allege want of employment, and the Relieving Officer have no rebutting evidence, the case is adjourned four weeks for his offer or reappearance. Should he be at work, he is required to fill up a paper with particulars of wage, rent, and number of dependants ; and from these particulars, verified (when necessary) by the Relieving Officer, our assessment is made.

II. CONCERNING WIVES. — Only when a separate estate exists can a wife be made liable for her husband's maintenance, and then the Guardians would be inclined to act leniently, lest they should upset the home. The pension, savings, or allowance of a husband are usually attached in full ; then the wife attends, when necessary, to ask for the release of an amount sufficient for herself and any dependent children she may have.

III. CONCERNING PARENTS.—The chief reason of our claim upon parents is the admission of a child to the Infirmary. This is a form of relief so eagerly sought, and so difficult to refuse on the doctor's cer-

tificate, that it must be most carefully guarded by inquiry into means. Exemptions from payment, when the father is at work, are rare, and only granted when the young family is numerous ; even then they are not final. The father or mother must, as a rule, return every four weeks as long as chargeability lasts, that we may ascertain if any change of circumstances has occurred. Widows are frequently before us with an application to have children admitted to the schools. Our practice is to leave one or two, according to capacity, with an able-bodied mother ; occasionally, however, all are taken, in order that the mother may go out to service, and then a weekly charge would be made, but we discourage as much as possible the idea that our institutions can be used for boarding-out purposes. A review of circumstances every three months will possibly bring a remarriage to light, then the children are returned to the new home ; should it bring to light pregnancy or an illegitimate birth, then a difficult question arises, "Are we to return the children or not?" It is a point that I would gladly hear discussed, if considered to be within the scope of this meeting. As a rule our practice is to return, but we do it with some misgivings. Deserted infants cause considerable trouble. Some soft-hearted or perhaps designing woman has taken an illegitimate child in charge, and on the first failure of payment by the mother, hurries to the Workhouse. It is our policy to delay admission as long as possible, to lay the burden of search upon the foster-mother, to take every care against collusion ; for our experience is, that a deserting mother, once evading us, is rarely discovered, and the foundling becomes a charge all the days of its minority. The normal obligation of parents ends on the child attaining sixteen ; but it returns in the case of sickness, unless such sickness be caused by misconduct. But I fear that the exemption applies only to the misconduct of girls, and not also to alcoholism, to which I

wish it could be extended, if not to some other maladies as well.

A stepfather enters on all the duties of a parent to his stepchildren, but only during the lifetime of their mother.

The grandparents are liable by law equally with the parents, but in practice they are not, I think, called upon, unless the parents themselves are dead or incapable.

IV. CONCERNING CHILDREN OVER TWENTY-ONE.—Married daughters are not liable, neither are grandchildren. It is, I believe, held that illegitimate children are exempt; but I am of opinion that the two last classes might very usefully be included among the relatives upon whom the Guardians have a legal claim; it being understood that the illegitimate child is liable in respect of the mother only. Single daughters of full age are not often called upon to pay in St Marylebone, unless their circumstances are exceptionally good. Where an aged widow, or less often a disabled father, asks us to compel children to maintain them, our practice is to see all that are liable, and reason with them, so as to obtain if possible a voluntary settlement. The Charity Organisation Society helps us in this, as in so many portions of our work. Failing a reasonable settlement, we admit the applicant to the House, and summon all the children liable before the magistrate. Once in recent years we made an exception, and gave outdoor relief in a special case, but the result was not satisfactory. Our assessments, made after a careful consideration of circumstances, have generally been upheld by the Marylebone magistrates, when our authority has failed to bring about acquiescence. All arrears are brought before the Finance Committee, and dealt with by them; but requests for diminutions of payment come before us, as having imposed the original payment.

Beyond these four classes, no other relatives are legally liable ; but in the exercise of their discretion, my Committee consider the actions of collaterals in determining the kind of relief to be given to an applicant. We should rarely, if ever, grant out-relief if these stood aside and contributed nothing ; we should at least require to be satisfied that there was good cause for abstention. Where a brother will not come forward to rescue a brother or sister from dependence upon the rates, there is likely to be something amiss in the family, which had best be met by an offer of the workhouse.

Taking a list of 112 cases down upon our Committee paper for 5th October, I find that the husband appeared, or was ordered to appear, in eleven instances for his wife, the parent in five instances for a child, the child in four instances for a parent. Of these twenty cases, one concerned admission to the schools, one to an asylum ; two concerned admission to the house, and sixteen to the infirmary. This fact emphasises the remark of an Inspector of the Local Government Board in their last report—in proportion as our infirmaries become what they ought to be, the demand on them will be greater. Consequently, as Guardians, we need to guard carefully this great avenue to pauperism.

The amount received by the Marylebone Board from relatives between 29th March 1896 and 27th March 1897 was £2,328 ; but if my reasoning be correct, this in no way represents even the money value of our work, economically considered ; for where the practice of enforcing payment is strict, a habit grows up, whereby relatives made conscious of their duties execute them apart from the pressure of law and the pocket of the ratepayer.

Were you to question me if I had any serious amendment of the present law upon maintenance to suggest, I should answer none ; not because I am not conscious of defects in Acts of Parliament, but because

I am also conscious of many objections to further stringency, and especially because I perceive how true it is of local as well as of imperial concerns—

“For forms of government let fools contest,
Whate’er is best administered is best.”

MAINTENANCE BY RELATIVES.

BY MR H. S. BOYS,

Guardian of the Poor, Hambledon, Surrey.

I HAVE been asked to read a short paper on this subject from the country Guardian’s point of view. It may be admitted at the outset that the evils of lax administration of this branch of the Poor Law are not so glaringly apparent to us in the rural districts as they probably are to the Boards sitting in London or in other great cities. In the country the close intimacy of the members of a family, the daily intercourse of village life, and general public opinion, still probably exercise a more effective influence on moral conduct than in the town, where each individual is lost in the crowd, where there is practically no criticism of conduct by the neighbours, and where, above all, the struggle for existence naturally loosens family ties, and concentrates a man’s attention on his own particular needs. But although we in the country may hope that we are more virtuous, or, it may be, more fortunate than our fellow-workers in the cities, no one, who watches carefully the proceedings of our country Boards, will rise from any one sitting without the consciousness that a better struggle might have been made to do our full duty, and that a concession here and an exemption there have been made which a just consideration of the consequences would have prohibited.

We are all in danger of forgetting that we sit on our Boards in a threefold capacity. We are there as

servants of the Government, as representatives of the ratepayers, and as Guardians of the poor.

As servants of the Government—unpaid servants, but nevertheless servants—we are bound to obey orders and administer the law as it exists, just as fully, just as unswervingly, as the magistrates on the bench. Now, what the law is on this subject has just been plainly set forth by Mr Alford, whose paper, by his courtesy and that of the Honorary Secretary, I have had the privilege of seeing before sitting down to write these notes. The law says that the relatives *shall* relieve and maintain. There is no option given, and it is our simple duty to carry out this law, and enforce the obligation on every one of the named relatives who are of sufficient ability. It is not open to us to vary the law or to get round it. We have simply to administer it.

Of our position as representatives of the ratepayers little need be said. So far as I have been able to observe, few ratepayers demur to expenditure, provided it is incurred justifiably and in the right direction. To expenditure in defiance of the law, and to doles dispensed as charity, they may quite reasonably object.

Our duties as Guardians of the poor are, I am aware, scaled with very different weights by different people, and it is possible that some in this Conference will judge that the hardest part of my task will be to show that a strict levy of contributions from the relatives of a pauper towards his maintenance is consistent with the part that should be played by a protector of the interests of the poor. Now it is exactly here that the argument of those who advocate firm administration is the most unassailable. They claim that it is unquestionably in the interests of the poor themselves that such contributions should be enforced. If the labourer knows that in his old age he will be well cared for, without any call being made upon his sons or other relatives for his support, there arises at once the strongest inducement to spend all, save nothing, and

keep clear of all provident societies and savings banks. Thus the system, which pensions the parent from the rates and exempts the relative from contribution, discourages thrift, and teaches the worker to rely solely upon the Poor Law. What is this but the very spirit of pauperism, to exorcise which should be our constant and earnest endeavour?

The rates must not be made to serve as an insurance fund against the result of idleness and improvidence, or distinct encouragement will be given to those vices. Nothing can be more certain than that the offer by the community to undertake responsibilities, especially money responsibilities, of the individual will immediately attract the attention of the most worthless members of that community, and pauperism in its worst form is thus encouraged. It is our plain duty to protect the young from themselves, and by all means in our power to prevent them from calculating on free provision from the rates for future indigence. In disposing, therefore, of an application for relief upon its merits, it is absolutely necessary for the conscientious Guardian (whom we will assume to be also intelligent) to give the fullest consideration to that question, which should be asked at every turn in Poor Law administration, What effect is my action going to have upon the community? What encouragement for good or for evil am I about to give?

Nor is the thrift matter by any means the most important which enters into this consideration. There is a far higher, far more important question. The 649 Boards of Guardians, passing orders on these applications week by week throughout England and Wales, exercise a most powerful influence in determining what shall be the character of the generation now in its early manhood. Shall it be one of sturdy independence, ready to meet and discharge responsibilities with courage and abnegation of self; or is it to be one of shirk and selfishness, ever seeking to shift on to the

shoulders of some one else the burden of duties which are found inconvenient or distasteful? It is not too much to say that this is the issue which is being determined at the present day by our Boards of Guardians, and to the thoughtful man the reflection suggests most serious responsibilities.

In speaking thus, I am assuming that most of us present here to-day are of opinion that the filial duty, which is the basis of the legal obligation, has also a moral sanction. I say most of us, for I am aware that there are some who will not admit this premiss, and who are ready to argue that the aged and the infirm should be made over entirely to the care of the State, and cease to be a burden to those who owe to them their life and nurture. Of such I desire to speak with respect. I can quite believe that the terrible problem of finding a way out of the maze of social difficulties has bewildered them, and they have grasped at that tempting but delusive clue, that never-failing resource, State aid. But it surely is strange that they, whose pater is of universal brotherhood, should be the first to deny the claims of filial duty. To be logical, they should free the parents also from their responsibilities, and should regret that they themselves were not passed, as soon as born, into a State crèche, instead of being brought up at their mothers' knees.

But most of us, I say again, will agree that the loosening of the ties of natural affection which, it seems from the testimony of many who have taken part in these Conferences, is the direct outcome of a lax administration of the Poor Law, is most keenly to be regretted, and that it is our most pressing duty to see, each one of us, that we no longer contribute to such a result. Now the strict enforcement of contributions from the relatives of an applicant for relief will enlist on the side of independence and filial duty the powerful influences of self-interest and common-sense. The relatives will no longer be tempted to allow the indi-

gent member of their family to resort to the Relieving Officer, and thus get quit of a burden which they themselves should bear. If they find that they have to pay in any case, they will prefer to keep him themselves, and thus save themselves from the discredit of having perhaps a father or mother on the rates—a discredit which they would possibly endure if it saved them outlay. The relatives' own characters are thus protected from degradation, and gradually, under the contribution system, a man's family would become a little Union in the very best sense, a co-operative society whose main bond is filial and paternal affection.

By the prompt and certain application of this principle of administration also we shall prevent much of that demoralising secrecy, much of those degrading subterfuges which now so often characterise the replies made to the inquiries instituted by a perfunctory Relieving Officer. When once it has become known in a district that the investigation into the circumstances of a family will be close and searching, and that, where those circumstances justify it, a rigorous exaction of contributions will follow, many of the claims that would otherwise have been made will now not be preferred at all, and those which still come before the Board will be more likely to bear their true colour. "It is worth while," says a former President of one of these Conferences, "by a firm administration of the Poor Law, to combat this hypocrisy, deceit, and neglect of family duties, and to substitute feelings of manly independence, and a sound view of the duties of children to parents, and of relations the one to the other."

I am not insensible to the plea of those who urge that it is undesirable to load those who are struggling to keep their heads above water with the extra burden of the care of the aged and infirm members of the family, and that, if we insist on levying these contributions, we shall prevent many a young couple from providing for their own old age. I claim to be second

to none in earnest desire to lighten such burdens ; but this is not to be effected by a system which directly encourages a man to make another carry his load for him, and we may be sure of this, that the son who is ready to turn his infirm parent out of doors will not be the man to expend providently the few shillings he thus thinks to save.

The whole question has been presented to my mind not so much by the statistics of the subject, though they are alarming enough, as by experience on the Board. When the question of repayment by relations arises, there is always a reluctance to levy the whole relief given, no matter what may be the position of the solvent relative. This simply arises from the old and lasting weakness of Guardians, the tendency to subordinate the hard but plain discharge of duty to the indulgence of benevolent feelings. The greatest difficulty is also found in realising that a Guardian's duty is solely to relieve destitution, and that, if there are relatives who are not destitute themselves, they must be called upon to help. Such Guardians are unable to free themselves from the idea that they are entitled to consider the comfort, as apart from the means of subsistence, of the applicants for relief, and they extend this natural, but mistaken, consideration to the case of the relatives. A contribution from a poor relative will unquestionably reduce his comfort ; but, as has been most truly said in very noble words, "there is something better worth preserving than bodily comfort. We Guardians have it in our power to give to our neighbours the independence which will make them noble citizens, and the love which, when it sacrifices all for a parent or a child, will give them a satisfaction unknown before. The power to do their duty, the power to love, is that thing better than life itself which we shall give to men, when we withdraw from them the temptation to leave to the State the care of the weak and aged."

DISCUSSION.

Mr BRUNNING (Lewisham) said he was very glad to be in accord with Mr Boys's paper to a very large extent. He did not agree with the Rev. B. H. Alford's paper. He went so far as to offer his services, which were not accepted—(laughter)—to inquire into the question of the ability of relatives of those chargeable in his Union to contribute towards their support. People were just as much pauperised by coming into the Metropolitan Asylums Board's mansions, as they were by going into the Workhouse infirmary. He desired to state how utterly impossible it was for the poorer class of people, whom he represented, to make any adequate provision for old age. (A voice: Why?) There was not much light in a quarter whence such a question could come. He had just come from a district where half the population was out of work. (Cries of "Where?") Orford, in Suffolk, and men were flocking from all parts of the county in the hope of getting work in repairing the sea-wall. (A voice: There's nothing in the South like that.) He differed emphatically from that assertion. There was not a village or a town in the South of England where there was not that day one-third of the population out of work. ("No, no," and "Order.")

Mr W. O. FIELD (Alverstoke) rose to a point of order: the question was "Maintenance by Relatives."

Mr BRUNNING at once left the platform.

Rev. B. H. ALFORD, in reply to Mr Field, stated that he was aware of the limit to the attachment of a pension, and he meant in his paper only the amount legally attachable.

Mr FIELD said the question was one that should be approached by Guardians from a humane point of view, and it was not right that Guardians should be called upon to administer the Poor Law without exercising a proper and humane discretion. He had known cases where a child had been sent to an imbecile ward or a lunatic asylum, and to have made the parents contribute towards its support, would have been to destroy for ever the home from which the child had gone. In many cases where the Guardians were called upon to exercise their powers of compelling relatives to support an inmate, it was directly traceable to some family disagreement. The Guardians were called upon to be the go-between and effect some arrangement. Where such cases did arise, he suggested that a very fair test would be to offer the house, and thus bring the relatives to a sense of their responsibility in the matter. In certain cases Guardians might, with great propriety, not enforce the Act of Elizabeth at all. He was glad that the subject had been ventilated, and he repeated that the question was one that required handling in the most tender and sympathetic manner. (Hear, hear.)

Mr CROOKS (Poplar) said he supposed he might take the two papers as being the practical and logical standpoint of their authors. It seemed to him that if Poor Law Conferences were worth any-

thing at all, that the law in relation to settlements should be amended. Not long ago a widow, with two children, resident in London, married a Yorkshireman, who died, leaving her unprovided for. The result was the mother had to take up her late husband's settlement in Yorkshire, and the children born in Stepney and Deptford were respectively placed in the Unions of those parishes. That was a thing that would hardly, he thought, commend itself even to the thick-headed Local Government Board. If there was to be a cast-iron system all over the country, why should there be Poor Law Guardians at all? Boards of Guardians were elected for the purpose of using their discretion. Pauperism was only a question of degree. There were rich paupers and poor paupers. He would have thought that the classification in Workhouses would have shown it. Who was going to decide how much persons should pay towards the support of their pauper relatives? Some of them had little families, and some of them had big families and small incomes. They yielded to none in their love of their parents, but if they had to decide between grandfather and child, they would probably say, "My little boy or girl will grow up a strong and useful member of society, and I must get him those boots, or I must send him to school another six months, and grandfather or grandmother must wait." They must administer the Poor Law with discretion and humanity. They had to consider the old people who had outlived all their friends and relatives, and those who were displaced by new inventions. If a man had served his country faithfully and well in the industrial army, he had as much right to help as a man who had been in the army or navy. (Hear, hear.)

Mr COLLINS (St Olave's) said that the second paper was a homily to the Conference, asking them to go out into the highways and byways and ask people not to become paupers. They were told that workhouses had become such palaces in the present day that it was quite a good thing to become a pauper. The reader of the first paper would compel persons, whether they could afford it or not, to maintain their parents, and would even make illegitimate children responsible for the maintenance of their female parents. People would soon have to maintain their mothers-in-law. If a person could maintain his pauper relatives it was the duty of the Guardians to compel him to do so. But if a cast-iron system was introduced, they would have people going to gaol simply because they were unfortunate enough to have poor relations. It would be a new method of imprisonment for debt. The whole spirit of Poor Law Conferences was still repression. There were gentlemen who were in favour of firm administration; they had got polite names for very objectionable things, and the latest development was a scheme for making relatives who had no legal liability pay for the maintenance of their relatives. He fervently hoped that such a proposal would never be accepted.

Mr BROWN (Lewisham) said that the papers had been very good,

and would do a great deal to encourage Guardians to administer the Poor Law with discretion and humanity.

Mr RICHARDS (Whitchurch, Hants) said they ought to study the meaning of "destitution" more than they did, and they ought to put the axe at the root of the tree. (A voice: Drunkenness.) Drunkenness was one great cause, and they must look the evil in the face, on the ground that prevention was better than cure. Early marriages were a fruitful source of poverty. He was in favour of compulsory provision for old age. Until that was achieved, Guardians ought to be as humane as possible in their treatment of the aged poor.

Mr HAWKES (Malling) regretted that it was not in order to move a resolution, as he would have liked to ascertain how far the meeting was in sympathy with the main contention of the second paper. In his opinion the question could not possibly be settled on the cast-iron lines laid down by the author of the paper. If he felt that, as a Guardian, his duty was to enforce the strict letter of the law, absolutely without reference to the circumstances of the person concerned, he would throw up the work at once as altogether hopeless. Could they be expected to go to the Board room and sit down and levy sixpence or a shilling a week on people who were perhaps only earning twelve shillings a week, on the ground that those persons would have a feeling of great and blessed comfort somewhere or other when they recalled the fact that they had assisted their relatives? It was often a real pleasure to bring individuals up to the scratch, but when a man was doing his best for his children, surely the claim of the children was prior to that of his aged relatives. Give the children of thrifty men and women as big a chance as they could. (Hear, hear.)

Mr WILLINK (Bradfield) said that every opportunity had been afforded the Conference that day of expressing all views on the subject. Speaking for his own much-abused Board, he said they always took into consideration the question of how far a person was able to maintain a pauper relative. It was the principle rather than the amount that they aimed at; and the Bradfield Board never pressed hardly on the relatives. The first paper was an admirable statement of the law on the question. He would like to ask all those who disagreed with the papers what they really wished to see. What he desired to see was every man in receipt of such an amount as would support him and his dependants throughout his life. They were hindering and not helping that by assisting people out of the rates.

Miss BAKER (Holborn) said that her Board some time ago endeavoured to improve the condition of schools. They found a large number of deserted children, and advertised that unless the children were claimed, they would be emigrated or boarded out in distant parts of the country. The Board received a large number of letters asking that the children should not be sent away from the schools; and after sifting the matter, they were able to hand over

about fifty of the children to relations who were able to support them, mostly to aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, and others who were not legally bound to maintain the children. (Hear, hear.) One frequent cause of children being left in the hands of the Guardians was, that after a child's treatment in the infirmary, its parents could not be found. Her Board discouraged visiting by relatives in doubtful cases, as children are often visited by their mothers as aunt or grandmother. She would never forget the grief of one boy who only discovered by the deathbed that his mother had been visiting him as his aunt. Referring to the morning's discussions, she only wished to add that she had never seen a patient's carriage and pair outside a fever hospital.

Mr ELLIOT (Hackney) asked where they met with the terrible severity attributed to some Boards. Were they not thrice slaying the slain?

A DELEGATE suggested that the new Committee of the Conference should invite every Board in the district to send papers, from which a selection could be made for the next Conference.

The PRESIDENT said he had to express his thanks to the readers of the papers. Both the papers contained most valuable facts, and he thought that Mr Boys had succeeded in putting forward, with a great deal of eloquence, views which were held by many Guardians. The work of Poor Law Guardians was in many respects very difficult. They had to apply the law so as to bear in mind the true interests of the poor, and at the same time to act in kindness and sympathy. Their time had been profitably devoted to the consideration of the two papers. (Hear, hear.)

The vote of thanks to the authors of the papers being then carried with acclamation,

Rev. B. H. ALFORD said that in considering whether relatives should contribute, his Board made every reasonable allowance.

Mr Boys said he would be very sorry if the Conference thought he advocated in any sense hard treatment. Firm administration was in the best interests of the poor themselves, and it was the duty of Guardians to give the most careful consideration to the question of the ability of relatives. Here was the crux of the whole matter, and if proper inquiries were made by Poor Law officers into this point in each case, many persons now on the rates would be relieved by their friends.

Mr WILLINK proposed a vote of thanks to the President. This was carried with enthusiasm, and the proceedings then terminated.

Annual Central Conference.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

TWENTY-SIXTH ANNUAL CENTRAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE, HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER OF THE GUILDHALL, IN THE CITY OF LONDON, ON 1ST AND 2ND MARCH 1898.

PRESIDENT—VICTOR C. W. CAVENDISH, Esq., M.P.,
Chairman, Ulverston Union.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference. Unions marked with an asterisk being represented by Guardians and not by Delegates :—

METROPOLITAN DIVISION. (30 Unions.)	POPLAR— Bacon, S. Crooks, W. Wyatt, Rev. J. T.
GREENWICH— Lambert, Rev. Brooke.	*ST GEORGE-IN-THE-EAST— Cowie, Miss.
HACKNEY— Barralet, Mrs P. Goodman, J.	ST PANCRAS— Lidgett, Miss E. S. Sheppard, G. F. Wilson, Miss F. M.
HAMPSTEAD— Benecke, Miss. Brooke-Herford, Miss H. Cropper, J. C.	ST SAVIOUR'S— Hamel, Rev. E. T. Horsley, Rev. J. W. Johnson, Miss.
HOLBORN— Baker, Miss I. M. Hill, H. O. (Clerk). Wilde, Miss I. C.	*SHOREDITCH— Clay, R. (Clerk).
KENSINGTON— Bousfield, W. Dockrell, Mrs M. Franklin, H. A. Reade, Rev. C. D. Rutherglen, J. H. (Clerk).	STEPNEY— Higley, Rev. F. H. Lewis, S. A. (Clerk). Mitchell, W. H. O'Connor, J.
LAMBETH— Grey, Miss A. M.	STRAND— Evans, Mrs M. M. Painton, Miss M.
LEWISHAM— Yeates, H. R.	

WANDSWORTH AND CLAPHAM.

Bray, W. T.
Brooks, R. H.
Gray, Mrs M.
Milligan, D. (Chairman).

WHITECHAPEL—

Bailey, W.
Burton, N. E.
Vallance, W. (Clerk).

WOOLWICH—

Escreet, Rev. C. E.
Harbour, Mrs.

SOUTH-EASTERN DIVISION.

(98 Unions.)

BERKS (12 Unions).

BRADFIELD—

Harding, J.
Mosdell, C.
Willink, H. G. (Chairman).

WALLINGFORD—

Blunt, Colonel.
Brown, Rev. J.
King, J. P. (Chairman).

HANTS (26 Unions).

ALVERSTOKE—

Crouch, Dr (Chairman).
Field, W. O. (Clerk).
King, G.

BASINGSTOKE—

Jervoise, F. M. E. (Chairman).
Lawford, L. (Vice-Chairman).

DROXFORD—

Clark, T. E. (Assistant Clerk).
Gardner, W.
Hasler, H. G. (Chairman).

HARTLEY WINTNEY—

Hitchcock, A.
Hunt, W. A.
Johnston, J. L.

PORTSEA ISLAND—

Bishop, J. (Vice-Chairman).
Palin, H. (Chairman).

*SOUTHAMPTON—

O'Meara, W. P.
Warren, H. (Chairman).

SOUTH STONEHAM—

Hinton, J.
Scovell, J.

KENT (26 Unions).

BROMLEY—

Ford, S. P.

DOVER—

Carder, E. (Clerk).
Peake, H.

EASTRY—

Birch, S.
Clope, F. S. (Clerk).

ISLE OF THANET—

Coleman, J.

MEDWAY—

Cole, G.
Hill, T.
Hills, V.
Norman, A. R. (Clerk).
Shön, Miss E. C.
Stigant, A. (Chairman).

SEVENOAKS—

Few, Rev. C. E. (Chairman).

STROOD—

Baker, T. H. (Chairman).

SURREY (11 Unions).

CROYDON—

Gardiner, J. W.
List, H. (Clerk).
Wood, T. P.

EPSOM—

Braithwaite, B.
Brown, W. S. J.
Morrissey, Rev. T.
Reader, W. O. (Clerk).

FARNHAM—

Mangles, Miss.
May, J.

HAMBLEDON—

Boys, H. S.

KINGSTON—

Brown, Mrs P.
Butterworth, Capt.

RICHMOND—

Dimbleby, F. W. (Vice-Chairman).
Edgar, O. G.
Sparks, Col. R. W. (Chairman).
Wood, A. J. (Clerk).

SUSSEX (23 Unions).

CUCKFIELD—

Maberley, Major.
Payne, Mrs.

EASTBOURNE—

Gorringe, E. J.
Jeffery, L. (Clerk).
Petherbridge, W. T.

EAST PRESTON—

Snow, A. D.

HORSHAM—

Debley, Major.
Hamilton, Gen. Sir W. S.
Rigg, H. A.

SOUTH MIDLAND DIVISION.

(65 Unions.)

BEDFORDSHIRE (6 Unions).

BEDFORD—

Bousfield, Mrs.
Ell, W.
Grafton, Mrs.
Moyes, S. C.
Newman, J.

LEIGHTON BUZZARD—

Elliot, D.
Harvey, Rev. T.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE (7 Unions).

AMERSHAM—

Barker, Rev. J. R.
Lowndes, W. (Chairman).
Webb, W.

AYLESBURY—

Clarke, C. J.
Turner, J.

BUCKINGHAM—

Tailby, J. G.
Verney, Sir E.

ETON—

Carver, W. R.
Taylor, J.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE (9 Unions).

*CAXTON AND ARRINGTON—

Green, W. J.
Sperling, A.
Wakefield, T.

*ELY—

Kempton, H.

HERTFORDSHIRE (13 Unions).

BISHOP STORTFORD—

Day, Mrs.
Gillham, R.
Mole, W. C.
Wetherall, Mrs H.

HITCHIN—

Jowitt, Rev. W. (Vice-Chairman).

WARE—

Ashton, F.
Vulliamy, T.

MIDDLESEX (6 Unions).

BRENTFORD—

Ellis, Miss L. D.
Sharp, Rev. C. J.

EDMONTON—

Baines, W.
Beasley, Mrs.
Broadbank, R. W.
Pollard, Mrs H. J.
Smith, Rev. G. J. (Vice-Chairman).

HENDON—

Gunns, Mrs E. J.
Joyner, Miss E. B.
Lovejoy, H. (Chairman).

UXBRIDGE—

Hilton, Rev. A. D. (Vice-Chairman).
M'Callum, J.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE (12 Unions).

BRIXWORTH—

Hawkshaw, W. L.
Pell, Albert.
Woodford, W. C. (Clerk).

KETTERING—

Page, Mrs.
Pollard, C. (Chairman).

NORTHAMPTON—

Holton, J.
Tomes, Ald. W.
Tonsley, F.

PETERBOROUGH—

Little, H. (Chairman).
Pettit, W. (Clerk).

OXFORDSHIRE (9 Unions).

OXFORD—

Grubb, R. J.
Phillips, G. J.

EASTERN DIVISION.

(55 Unions.)

ESSEX (16 Unions).

CHELMSFORD—

Barnard, Rev. M. R.

Brown, W., jun.

Duffield, W. W. (Clerk).

COLCHESTER—

Sewell, Mrs S.

Sparling, A. S. B.

HALSTEAD—

Simmons, W.

Vaisey, J. R.

Worden, Miss L.

ORSETT—

Brooks, Mrs A.

Crawley, Rev. R. T.

Ellis, A.

*ROMFORD—

Bailey, Mrs.

WEST HAM—

Isaacs, Mrs A. J.

Roberts, Mrs E.

NORFOLK (22 Unions).

*BLOFIELD—

Clark, Mrs M. J.

EAST AND WEST FLEGG—

Tacon, Rev. R. J.

SUFFOLK (17 Unions).

COSFORD—

Newman, A. (Clerk).

IPSWICH—

Anness, S. R. (Chairman).

Quinton, G.

Vulliamy, A. F. (Clerk).

MUTFORD AND LOTHINGLAND—

Bee, T.

Wigg, G.

RISBRIDGE—

Crow, H.

SAMFORD—

Hocking, Rev. J. H. (Chairman).

Thwaites, T.

SOUTH-WESTERN DIVISION.

(79 Unions.)

DEVONSHIRE (20 Unions).

EXETER—

Domville, E. J. (Chairman).

ST THOMAS—

Courtney, J.

STOKE DAMEREL—

Gard, A. (Clerk).

Goodman, C.

Hornbrook, W.

SOMERSETSHIRE (17 Unions).

BEDMINSTER—

Fry, Miss J. M.

Weatherly, F. (Chairman).

KEYNSHAM—

Gibbs, W. G.

Martin, C. (Clerk).

WELLINGTON—

Ewens, H.

Price, W. S. (Clerk).

WINCANTON—

Bailward, T. H. M.

WILTSHIRE (17 Unions).

CHIPPENHAM—

Clutterbuck, E. H. (Chairman).

Fuller, Mrs.

Napier, H. B.

HIGHWORTH AND SWINDON—

Hussey-Freke, A. D. (Chairman).

Raggett, H.

MELKSHAM—

Bell, W. H.

Blake, J. H. (Vice-Chairman).

SALISBURY—

Hammick, W. M.

Harding, R. C.

Hodding, F. (Clark).

TISBURY—

Chapman, Miss F. M.

WILTON—

Duckles, W.

Macdonald, Rev. F. W.

Wilson, G. M. (Clerk).

WEST MIDLAND DIVISION.

(82 Unions.)

GLOUCESTERSHIRE (17 Unions).

BARTON REGIS—

Clifford, Miss M.
Rumsey, Major G. F. (Chairman).
Winkworth, Miss.
Woollam, Miss.

BRISTOL—

Boutflower, C. E. D. (Vice-Chairman).
Jones, W. (Chairman).
Simpson, J. J. (Clerk).

CIRENCESTER—

Cripps, E. W. (Vice-Chairman).
Griffiths, W.

NORTHLEACH—

Dutton, Hon. and Rev. F. G.
(Chairman).

WHEATENHURST—

Lloyd-Baker, G. E. (Vice-Chairman).

HEREFORDSHIRE (8 Unions).

DORE—

Bellers, Colonel.

HEREFORD—

Ronalds, H. (Chairman).

WEOBLEY—

Boughton-Knight, A. G.

STAFFORDSHIRE (16 Unions).

BURTON-UPON-TRENT—

Barber, Aldn. J. L. P. (Chairman).
Chamberlin, C. F. (Clerk).
Fairclough, Rev. W. H. H.

LICHFIELD—

Lonsdale, Miss S.

WEST BROMWICH—

Ward, H. (Clerk).
Wells, A. L. (Chairman).

WOLSTANTON AND BURSLEM—

Cotton, A.
Lowndes, J. A. (Clerk).

WARWICKSHIRE (13 Unions).

BIRMINGHAM—

Gateley, S. (Vice-Chairman).
Manton, H. J.

COVENTRY—

Arch, J. (Clerk).
Dalton, W. E.
Pegg, T. G. (Chairman).

RUGBY—

Townsend, Dr T. S.

STRATFORD-ON-AVON—

Lowe, Mrs R. J.

WARWICK—

Davies, J. H.
Gilbert, W.
Passman, C. H. (Clerk).

WORCESTERSHIRE (13 Unions).

KINGS NORTON—

Burdett, W.
Curtis, R. J.
Stacey, Miss A.

*MARTLEY—

Flintoff, Rev. T. N.

PERSHORE—

Davies, Lieut.-Gen. H. F.

WORCESTER—

Browne, Mrs W.

NORTH MIDLAND DIVISION.

(45 Unions.)

DERBYSHIRE (9 Unions).

BAKEWELL—

Hacking, Rev. E.
Hawes, A. (Clerk).
Taylor, H. B.

CHESTERFIELD—

Cain, P.
Hind, E. F.

LEICESTERSHIRE (11 Unions).

ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH—

Denton, Rev. Canon (Chairman).

BARROW-ON-SOAR—

Cuffling, W. H. (Vice-Chairman).
Scott, J. J. F. (Clerk).
Smith, J. T. (Chairman).

LEICESTER—

Ellis, Miss C.
Holland, D. G. (Chairman).
Shaw, S. (Vice-Chairman).
Willder, Mrs M.

LUTTERWORTH—

Bodycote, T. C. (Clerk).
Squirrell, Rev. C. G.

MARKET HARBOROUGH—

Bragg, W. B.
Danby, Rev. C. E. (Chairman).
Pulteney, Rev. H. W.

LINCOLNSHIRE (15 Unions).

LINCOLN—

Danby, W. B. (Clerk).
Pratt, E. (Chairman).

STAMFORD—

Knott, H. (Vice-Chairman).

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE (8 Unions).

BASFORD—

Faulconbridge, W. F. (Vice-Chairman).
Hanson, R. G. (Chairman).
Spencer, C. J. (Clerk).

MANSFIELD—

Hibbert, G. H. (Clerk).
Wilkinson, J. E.
Wilson, J. L.

NOTTINGHAM—

Howard, G. M. (Clerk).
Wright, J. (Chairman).

WORKSOP—

Emmerson, G.
Mellish, H.

NORTH-WESTERN DIVISION.

(41 Unions.)

CHESHIRE (11 Unions).

BIRKENHEAD—

Carter, J. (Clerk).
Denman, E. (Chairman).
Martin, Dr J. T. (Vice-Chairman).

BUCKLOW—

Clare, G.
Hignett, Rev. Canon (Chairman).
Leigh, G. (Clerk).
Mercer, W.

*CONGLETON—

Ferrand, H. (Clerk).

WIRRAL—

Knowles, W. (Chairman).
Latham, H. A.
Latham, J. S.
Morris, C.

LANCASHIRE (30 Unions).

BARROW-IN-FURNESS—

Barrand, J. (Vice-Chairman).
Taylor, F. (Clerk).

BARTON-UPON-IRWELL—

Jones, Rev. K. L.
Whitworth, J. W. (Clerk).

BLACKBURN—

Ashton, T.
Birch, J. (Assistant Clerk).
Greenwood, J. (Vice-Chairman).

BOLTON—

Cooper, S. (Clerk).
Ward, T.
Watkinson, J. W.

BURNLEY—

Horn, J. S.

BURY—

Barlow, R.
Firth, S.
Isherwood, J. (Clerk).

CHORLTON—

Pankhurst, Mrs.
Ramsden, W.
Rhodes, Dr J. M. (Chairman).
Sale, Mrs.
Tomlinson, C. L.

LEIGH—

Clegg, R. J. (Chairman).
Hayes, Mrs A.
King, Mrs E.
Williams, E.

LIVERPOOL—

Byrne, J.
Hagger, H. J. (Clerk).
Noys, J.
Peet, H.

MANCHESTER—

Rooke, G.

PRESCOT—

Davies, G. (Chairman).
Graves, R. A. (Vice-Chairman).
Mann, A. F. (Clerk).

PRESTWICH—

Briggs, T. (Chairman).
Johnson, S.
Letts, E. F.
Ogden, E. W. (Clerk).
Sassen, W.

ROCHDALE—

Crabtree, W.
Leach, R. A. (Clerk).
Worth, J. T. (Chairman).

SALFORD—

Dobson, J. R.
Hill, S. (Chairman).
Townson, F. (Clerk).

TOXTETH PARK—

Abercrombie, W.
Dodson, —.
Jennings, W. (Chairman).
Mather, R.
Moulding, J. (Clerk).
Ronald, Miss H.
Skinner, —.

ULVERSTON—

Cross, Viscount.
Dean, C. W. (Clerk).
Hodgson, J. (Vice-Chairman).

WARRINGTON—

Clay, Mrs L.
Pilling, G.
Sutton, J. C. (Clerk).

WEST DERBY—

Brewster, W. R. (Chairman).
Cleaver, H. P. (Clerk).
Mead, G. L.

WIGAN—

Ackerley, H. (Clerk).
Ashton, J. T.
Ball, E.

YORKSHIRE DIVISION.

(62 Unions.)

EAST RIDING (10 Unions).

KINGSTON-UPON-HULL—

Farrell, J. (Deputy-Governor).
Feldman, H. (Governor).
Winter, R. H. (Clerk).

SCULCOATES—

Dean, H.
Jackson, W. (Assistant Clerk).
Ramsden, Rev. H. P.

NORTH RIDING (17 Unions).

HELMSLEY—

Feversham, The Earl of.

MIDDLESBROUGH—

Bruce, W. J.
Dales, J. J. (Clerk).
Webb, J.

WEST RIDING (35 Unions).

BRADFORD—

Guy, T. A. (Chairman).
Moser, Mrs.
Narey, W.
Powell, Sir F. S., M.P.
Stott, Mrs.

DEWSBURY—

Brown, J.
Machell, R. F.
Pickersgill, C. P.
Smith, W. (Chairman).

HALIFAX—

Longbotham, A. T. (Clerk).
Smith, Mrs.
Tillotson, J. W.

HUDDERSFIELD—

Bentley, G.
Rigby, E. A.
Whitwam, E.

HUNSLET—

Hirst, J. (Chairman).
Mee, F. W. (Clerk).

LEEDS—

Child, H. (Chairman).
Ford, J. H. (Clerk).
Preston, T.

NORTH BIERLEY—

Helmsley, J. E. (Clerk).
Longbottom, A. (Chairman).
Roberts, N. S. (Vice-Chairman).

SHEFFIELD—

Clarke, T.
Stott, J. C.

TADCASTER—

Hill, W.
White, J.

WAKEFIELD—

Baumont, H. (Clerk).
Burnley, D.
Wordsworth, T. (Chairman).

WORTLEY—

Broughton, C. J. E.
Fazey, J.

NORTHERN DIVISION.

(39 Unions.)

CUMBERLAND (9 Unions).

CARLISLE—

Lonsdale, H. B. (Clerk).
Waterton, Rev. Canon (Chairman).

DURHAM (15 Unions).

GATESHEAD—

Affleck, R. (Chairman).
Craighill, G. (Clerk).
Fisher, W.

SOUTH SHIELDS—

Archbold, R. (Chairman).
Atkinson, W. (Vice-Chairman).
Browell, E. J. J.
Coulson, J. W. (Clerk).
Laidler, J. B.

SUNDERLAND—

Armstrong, T. (Chairman).
Hodgson, J. W. (Clerk).

NORTHUMBERLAND (12 Unions).

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE—

Beattie, J. (Chairman).
Gibson, J. W. (Clerk).
Rodgers, J. H. (Vice-Chairman).

WESTMORELAND (3 Unions).

KENDAL—

Cropper, Hon. Mrs.

MONMOUTH AND WELSH
DIVISION. (53 Unions.)

SOUTH WALES (27 Unions).

GLAMORGANSHIRE (8 Unions).

BRIDGEND AND COWBRIDGE—

Barrow, J.

CARDIFF—

Jones, Price.
Harris, A. J. (Clerk).
Thompson, Mrs H. C.

PONTARDAWE—

Gordon, Mrs A.
John, D. W.

SWANSEA—

Lewis, Rev. Dr J. G. (Chairman).
Mill, W. H.

NORTH WALES (20 Unions).

DENBIGHSHIRE (3 Unions).

WREXHAM—

Griffith - Boscawen, Capt. B. T.
(Chairman).

FLINTSHIRE (3 Unions).

*HOLYWELL—

Roberts, P. H. (Clerk).
Roberts, William.

VISITORS.

Bagenal, P. H.
Dawson, C. A.
Fleming, Baldwin. } Local Government
Preston, J. W. } Board Inspectors.
Moorsom, W. M. }

Fuller, A., Medical Inspector for Poor
Law Purposes.

Mason, Miss M. H., Inspector of
Boarded-out Children.

Lothian, Marchioness of.

Monteagle, Lord.

Monteagle, Lady.

Buxton, Lady.

trutt, Hon. F.

Gill, Miss T. W. } Workhouse Infirmary
Wilson, Miss } Nursing Association.

Mackay, T.
Charlton, Miss.
Beattie, Mrs.
Gibson, Mrs.
Clegg, Mrs R. J.
Sargent, Dr.
Clark, E.
Latham, Mrs.
Gillett, Mrs.
Hinton, Mrs.
Saley, Mrs.
Bowrie, Mrs.
Gordon, Miss.
Wigg, Miss.
Cohen, Miss.
Humphry, Miss.
Hohnhorst, Mrs.

The following Counties sent no representatives, viz. :—

South Midland Division ...	...	Huntingdonshire.
South-Western „ ...	...	Cornwall, Dorsetshire.
West Midland „ ...	...	Shropshire.
North Midland „ ...	...	Rutlandshire.
Monmouth and Welsh Division ...	{	Monmouthshire, Anglesey, Brecknockshire, Cardiganshire, Carnarvonshire, Carmar- thenshire, Merionethshire, Montgomery- shire, Pembrokeshire, Radnorshire.

The following Unions paid for Delegates, but appear not to have been represented, viz. :—Fulham, Gravesend and Milton, Llanelly, Maidstone, Newbury, Paddington, Pottersbury, St Albans, Thakeham, and Westminster.

[*Note.*—Great pains have been taken to make the above list complete. If the names of any of those present at the Conference are omitted, it is in consequence of the tickets having been either insufficiently or not at all completed.]

TUESDAY, 1ST MARCH 1898.

THE Right Hon. the Lord Mayor of London (Colonel Horatio Davies, M.P.) opened the proceedings, and welcomed the delegates to the city.

THE LORD MAYOR said—My object in coming here is to welcome this great Conference to the City of London in the heart of the greatest city in the kingdom. Your object in coming here is to discuss a subject which is interesting to all of us, and if you can only solve the great problem which you have come here to discuss, you will, I am sure, enjoy the good wishes, not only of those who have to administer the Poor Law, but also of those who have to contribute towards its cost. It is not for me to make any suggestion to you, but if I may be allowed to do so, I should like to say this, that if in your deliberations you can arrive at any suggestion by which you can prevent poverty, you will deserve the good wishes of all. I observe on this paper of business that one of the subjects which you are to discuss is that of Nursing in Workhouses. Now, I object to that word “Workhouse.” Nursing in infirmaries I can understand. A Workhouse is not a place for nursing; it is a house where men go who are able to work. I happen myself to be connected with a lunatic asylum; in that asylum we have patients who pay, and those who do not pay. I object to call those who do not pay, or who are not able to pay, I object to call them paupers; and I do not allow those who are about me to do so either. Therefore I would suggest to you that if you can elevate the poor, make them more independent, one great and good object will be attained. As I said before, my duty is to welcome you in the name of the citizens of London. I do so with very great pleasure, and I hope the result will be entirely satisfactory to yourselves and all who have to administer the Poor Law. (Cheers.)

Mr W. BOUSFIELD (*Vice-Chairman of the Central Committee*) said—Before the Lord Mayor leaves us, I think we should express to him our great thanks for the kindness of the Corporation in lending us the Guildhall for the purposes of our meeting. (Cheers.)

The CHAIRMAN (Mr VICTOR CAVENDISH) said — Having been asked to preside over this Conference, I beg leave to second that proposition, which will be gratefully endorsed by delegates from all parts of England, and all of them I am sure are glad to see that the Lord Mayor is willing to take the position which has been filled by his predecessors, and to open these Conferences. (Cheers.)

Rev. Dr J. GOVER LEWIS (*Chairman, Swansea Union*) said that, coming from the Principality, he heartily endorsed the vote of thanks, which was then at once carried with acclamation, and the Lord Mayor left the meeting.

Mr CHANCE, the Hon. Sec., stated that he had received letters regretting inability to attend the Conference from the following:—Mr Knollys, Mr Byam Davies, and Mr Bircham (*Local Government Board Inspector*) ; also Sir John Hibbert, and the Rev. G. Davenport, members of the Central Committee ; and Mrs Louisa Twining.

Mr CHANCE then read the Report of the Central Committee as follows:—

REPORT OF CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

During the past year ten District Poor Law Conferences have been held. Had it not been decided to change the time of holding the South Midland District Conference in the future from the winter to the spring, the year would have been a record one. In their last Report the Committee expressed their regret that there was no organisation for holding annual Poor Law Conferences in the South Wales and South-Western Districts. It affords them, therefore, the greater pleasure to report now that two of the most successful of the year's Conferences were held in those districts, and that the interest which was taken in them may be accepted as a sign that they will not again be allowed to lapse.

As usual the subjects discussed at the year's Conferences have covered a wide field. Four papers were read on Outdoor Relief, a hardy annual ; three papers on Increased Powers of Detention ; three papers on the Pauper Children question ; two papers on each of the following subjects, viz., Maintenance by Relations, on Boarding-out, and Cause of Pauperism ; and one paper on each of the following subjects, viz., Treatment of Infectious Diseases in Rural Districts, Poor Law Medical Economics, Nursing in Workhouses, Administration of the Poor Laws, Education of Vagrant Children, Workhouse Amalgamation, Industrial Training of Workhouse Girls,

Classification of Lunatics, Imbeciles, and Idiots; Local Taxation, Local Rating, and Assessment; the Agricultural Labourer in Wales, and the Office of Overseer.

The Committee would remind the Conference, and Boards of Guardians generally, that the reports of these Conferences will be bound up in a volume together with a full index and a table of all the resolutions passed at the year's Conferences. The volume will also contain a portrait and memoir of the late Mr Bland Garland, for so many years the well-known Chairman of the Bradfield Union. They think it well, also, to mention that at the present time only 79 Boards of Guardians subscribe for copies of all these Reports or for the bound volumes, and they hope that another year they may be able to announce a large increase in the number of Boards subscribing for the Annual Bound Volume.

The Conference will remember that last year the Committee passed a resolution, which subsequently received the support of a large number of Boards, that each Board of Guardians should be entitled to send two Guardians and the Clerk at the expense of the rates to the Central Poor Law Conferences, irrespective of distance. They are very glad to be able to report that the Local Government Board have acceded to this request, and that on the 2nd day of December last an order was issued to that effect.

The Committee did not meet with equal success in their request that Assessment Committees, in respect of their functions as assessing authorities of the country, should be directly represented on the Local Taxation Commission. The correspondence which has passed on the subject since the Committee's last Report will be found in Appendix A.

In consequence of some remarks made by Viscount Peel, the President of the State Children's Aid Association, at a meeting of the Association on the 1st June last in London, criticising very severely, and as the Committee thought, unfairly, the education and training given to children in Poor Law schools, and intimating that they left the school mere helpless creatures, the Committee thought it well that these strictures on the work of Guardians, school managers, and school officers should not be allowed to pass unchallenged. Consequently, in co-operation with the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants, they prepared an answer to Lord Peel, which was published in the form of an open letter, and signed by the Chairman, Hon. Treasurer, and Hon. Secretary of the Central Committee, and by the Hon. Secretary of the Association. Copies of this letter were sent to every

Member of Parliament, and the Committee believe that its effect was to give a truer impression of the facts relating to the schools. A reply to the letter by Lord Peel has since been published by the Association, and both the letter and the reply will be found in Appendix B.

The event of the year has no doubt been the establishment of a Poor Law Unions Association. A full report of the proceedings which led up to the formation of the Association with the rules adopted has been published, and forms part of the Annual Volume of the Reports of Poor Law Conferences for the year. The matter passed out of the hands of the Committee after the passing of the scheme by a very representative Conference of Guardians delegated by their Boards, but they wish the Association every success in the objects which it has in view, and hope that there may be close co-operation in future between the Association and these Conferences, to the benefit of sound Poor Law administration.

The Committee have had under consideration the Bill which has been introduced into Parliament by Mr Ernest Flower for the further protection of children who come under the care of Boards of Guardians, and they will use their best endeavours to get a really satisfactory measure dealing with the subject passed into law.

The Committee hope that the large attendance of Guardians at these Conferences may be taken as a sign that they are really appreciated, although the Council Chamber of the Guildhall, for the use of which the Committee take this opportunity to gratefully acknowledge the kindness of the Lord Mayor and the Corporation of the City of London, is so admirably suited for the purposes of the Central Conferences, it may become a question whether the large representation will not necessitate their removal to a hall more capable of seating all the delegates who now attend them.

The Committee have done their best in the matter of accommodating delegates so that they may both hear and see, and they hope that the Conference will recognise the difficulties which they have had in providing for the comfort of so large a representation of Boards of Guardians as is present to-day.

The Committee cannot conclude their Report without a reference to the resignation by Mr J. J. Gover of the post of Assistant Secretary to the Committee. Mr Gover tendered his resignation last November, and the Committee accepted it with much regret, but at their earnest request he kindly consented to retain his post until after the present Conference. The Committee feel very deeply the loss of his valued services

to the Conferences, and that the Conference owes him a hearty vote of thanks for the earnest and conscientious way in which he has performed the duties of his office.

APPENDIX A.

LOCAL TAXATION COMMISSION.

FURTHER ACTION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE IN REGARD TO THE REPRESENTATION OF ASSESSMENT COMMITTEES UPON THE LOCAL TAXATION COMMISSION.

[The correspondence on this subject which passed between the President of the Local Government Board and the Central Committee up to and inclusive of the 20th January 1897, is printed in Appendix E of the Report of the Committee to the Central Conference of 1897.]

Subsequently to the letter from the President of the Local Government Board, dated the 20th January 1897, refusing to appoint representatives of Assessment Committees upon the Local Taxation Commission, it was brought to the notice of the Committee that two vacancies had arisen on the Commission owing to the resignation of two of its members. Consequently, at a Committee meeting on the 8th March 1897, they passed the following resolution: "That Assessment Committees ought to be represented on the Local Taxation Commission, seeing that they are the assessing authorities of the country, and that the amount of experience so gained by them in dealing with all matters affecting local taxation renders it of great importance that they should be so represented, and that as there are now two vacancies on the Commission, the Local Government Board be requested to further the appointment of two members or clerks of such Committees to fill these vacancies."

It was further resolved that Mr Chaplin should be asked to receive a deputation on the subject, and that the deputation should consist of Sir F. S. Powell, Bart., M.P. (introducer), Rev. Canon Denton, Rev. E. E. Morris, Mr J. Beattie, Mr H. J. Hagger, Mr A. F. Vulliamy, Mr Craighill, and the Hon. Secretary. The following correspondence then passed:—

WHARFENDEN, FRIMLEY,
8th March 1897.

*To the Rt. Hon. H. CHAPLIN, M.P.,
President of the Local Government Board.*

SIR,—I am directed by the Committee of these Conferences to advert to the correspondence which has taken place on the subject of Union Assessment Committees being represented on the Local Taxation Commission, and, having regard to the fact that there are at the present time two vacancies to fill up on the Commission, to again strongly urge the great necessity and importance of members or clerks of Assessment Committees being selected to fill such vacancies, and thus make the Commission representative of all local authorities.

The Committee feel so strongly on the matter that they have appointed a

deputation of their number, including Sir F. S. Powell, M.P., the President of this year's Central Conference, to attend upon you at the Local Government Board Office, on Wednesday next, at such time as you may appoint, to more fully explain their views.

If your engagements will not permit of your personally receiving the deputation, I am to request that it may be received by Mr T. W. Russell, M.P., the Board's Parliamentary Secretary.

I am also to request that a reply may be forwarded to me at the Central Poor Law Conference, Guildhall, London, in the forenoon on Wednesday.

I am, your obedient Servant,

W. CHANCE,
Hon. Sec.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD,
WHITEHALL, S.W., 10th March 1897.

DEAR SIR,—In reply to your letter of the 8th, on the subject of the constitution of the Royal Commission on Local Taxation, Mr Chaplin desires me to say that, so far as he is aware, there is only one vacancy pending on the Commission, and that that has been practically provided for already.

Under these circumstances, it appears to him to be quite unnecessary for a deputation from the Committee of the Central Poor Law Conferences to wait upon him as suggested.

Yours faithfully,

H. C. MONRO.

W. CHANCE, Esq.

WHARFENDEN, FRIMLEY,
10th March 1897.

Local Taxation Commission.

DEAR SIR,—For the information of the Committee of these Conferences, I am sure you will kindly inform me who has been appointed to fill the vacancy on the Commission caused by the appointment of Sir Alfred Milner, K.C.B., to the Governorship of the Cape Colony. The Committee, as representing Boards of Guardians in England and Wales, is naturally most interested on the subject, and if the new member of the Commission is actually a member of a Union Assessment Committee, I am certain they will be quite satisfied that the unanimous desire of Boards of Guardians has been acceded to.

I have been directed to write this letter by the Committee, and I am sure you will forgive my troubling you again in the matter.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

W. CHANCE,
Hon. Sec.

H. C. MONRO, Esq.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD,
WHITEHALL, S.W., 13th March 1897.

DEAR SIR,—I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th instant. In reply to it I can only say that until the Royal Assent has been given to the selection of the person to fill Sir Alfred Milner's place on the Royal Commission, no announcement on the subject can be made.

Yours faithfully,

H. C. MONRO.

W. CHANCE, Esq.

WHARFENDEN, FRIMLEY,
17th March 1897.

DEAR SIR,—I am obliged for your letter of the 13th inst. relating to the Local Taxation Commission. I need scarcely say that I should not have asked for the name of the person who had been selected to fill the place of Sir A. Milner if I

had not understood from your previous letter that the Royal Assent had already been given to his appointment.

In that letter you said that the vacancy had been practically provided for, and the Committee understood that to mean that all the formalities had been gone through.

I shall be glad to know in due course who has been appointed, as my Committee is exceedingly interested in the appointment.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

W. CHANCE.

H. C. MONRO, Esq.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOARD,
WHITEHALL, S.W., 26th April 1897.

DEAR SIR,—Mr G. H. Murray, Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue, has been appointed a member of the Royal Commission on Local Taxation *vice* Sir A. Milner.

Yours faithfully,

NOEL T. KERSHAW.

W. CHANCE, Esq.

At a meeting of the Committee, on the 26th April 1897, the above correspondence, together with a letter from Mr A. Wilson Fox, the Secretary to the Royal Commission on Local Taxation, asking whether the Committee desired to send witnesses to offer evidence before the Commission, and, if so, to state the particular points upon which the witnesses proposed to offer evidence, was read, when it was resolved as follows:—

“That in view of the fact that the Local Government Board has persistently ignored the request of the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences that Union Assessment Committees should be directly represented on the Local Taxation Commission, the Committee does not propose to submit the names of any witnesses.”

This resolution was duly acknowledged by Mr A. Wilson Fox, in a letter dated the 4th May 1897.

APPENDIX B.

LETTER TO THE RIGHT HON. VISCOUNT PEEL,

Chairman of the State Children's Aid Association,

ON THE CARE AND CONTROL OF PAUPER CHILDREN.

3rd August 1897.

MY LORD,—We observe that your Lordship, in advocating the objects of the State Children's Aid Association on the 1st June last, is reported as having said of the Poor Law Schools that the children left them without having received efficient and good training, and that when the children missed the mechanical restraint to which they had been accustomed in these schools, they fell upon their own resources, which amounted to nothing at all.

Your Lordship represents a large number of persons whom we believe to be unacquainted with the work of the London Poor Law Schools by personal inspection. We believe that the work of the schools can only be properly gauged by those who have an intimate acquaintance with it.

The Poor Law Schools have not been as a whole in advance of the schools of the same nature in the matter of industrial training, but they have certainly been quite up to the average, whilst several schools can hold their own against any institution. One, at least, allows the boys to attend technical instruction outside, and in others the education in these branches can compete with any given at the London School Board or ordinary Secondary Schools. We shall refer again to this point.

The trades generally taught are tailoring, shoemaking, carpentering, smiths' work, and baking, and evidence of the general efficiency of the training is seen in the fact that Guardians and Managers experience no difficulty in well placing out their boys.

Though large numbers of the boys are trained for naval and military bands, they cannot be supplied as fast as they are wanted. It is indeed a fact that some of our best bands are almost entirely recruited from these boys, some of whom now occupy the highest positions in them.*

As to the girls, before they leave for service they receive instruction in kitchen, house, and laundry work; and in many schools cook with the ordinary kitcheners and wash in the ordinary tubs. It is with the girls—even more than in the case of the boys—the matron cannot supply the demand for them. In one of the schools they are not allowed to take situations where less than two servants are kept, whilst in all greater care is annually taken to provide better places for them. That the training in the schools cannot be so inefficient and useless as alleged, the instances given in the Appendix show.

* See Appendix.

Further, on this point, and as confirming Mr Lockwood's Return, which was laid before the Poor Law Schools Committee in his evidence, we would especially direct your Lordship's attention to Lord Warkworth's Return of the 22nd July 1896, which showed that out of 37,969 adult inmates of Metropolitan Workhouses and Infirmaries on the 30th May 1897, only 435 had been educated in Poor Law Schools, and that of these 435 no fewer than 232 had become chargeable through sickness or permanent mental or bodily infirmity.*

The Poor Law Schools system is an expensive one, and each child costs considerably more than if it were boarded out; but we would remind your Lordship that it is impossible to board out anything like all the children for whose education and care the Poor Law becomes responsible, and it must be borne in mind that boarding-out homes need to be very carefully selected, and must remain limited in supply, while even in a good home constant supervision of the child is required. On the question of cost it must not be forgotten that the £13 per annum only covers the payment for maintenance, clothing, and medical attendance. From time to time serious cases of cruelty and ill-treatment on the part of the foster parents are brought to light. It would be easy to fill a book with such cases, but a reference to the official Annual Reports of Miss Mason, the Government Inspector of Boarding-out, will be sufficient to convince your Lordship of the abuses of the system which may arise.

We are convinced that anybody who has had a past experience of the schools, and who had visited them at the time of the Report of the Poor Law Schools Committee, which created such an unfavourable impression as to their management and their work, would frankly acknowledge the gradual improvement in them, and the generally good results attained. We are afraid that some of those who under your presidency have given their names to the Association have placed too much reliance on the statements of those whose hostility to the system is such that one of their number—a leader of the agitation against them—has endorsed such a paradoxical statement as, "The better the school, the worse for the child." You would, we are sure, find that the children get on well in after-life, and that they show their appreciation of the individual interest taken in them by keeping up communication, after they have left the schools, with the master and matron, teachers and other officers. A few specimens of their letters are appended.†

Your Lordship must not suppose that we are wedded to the system of large "Barrack" Schools or to the District Schools system for the Metropolis, or that we should oppose the reduction of the number of children in the schools. At the same time, no one can be blind to the immense improvement which the District School is upon the old Workhouse School. We are confident that the districts will be broken up as soon as it is possible to do so; and we believe

* Return No. 308 (1896).

† It has not been thought necessary to republish these interesting letters.

that the Local Government Board, as the Central Poor Law Authority, is fully aware of the necessity of this being done. We should regret exceedingly to see any "*great* Central Authority" other than the present Government Department established for London.

We observe that your Lordship has, as Chairman of the Council of References and Executive Committee of the State Children's Aid Association, signed a memorial to the Right Hon. Henry Chaplin, M.P., as the President of the Local Government Board, asking, among other things, that fuller power should be given to the Metropolitan Asylums Board over other classes of Poor Law children than those assigned to it by the recent order. It is evident, indeed, that the Association wishes now to make the Asylums Board the "*great* Central Authority" for the Metropolis, to which you referred in your speech; but we would remind your Lordship that that Board is more particularly established for dealing with infectious and mental diseases, and as such it is quite logical that all classes of Poor Law children who suffer from such diseases should be dealt with by it.

Certainly the opposition to the Metropolitan Asylums Board becoming the Central Metropolitan Authority for other classes of Poor Law children would be very great on the part of the London rate-payers. It is not a directly elected body like a Board of Guardians. And here we would remark that it is not true to say that the idea of a "Central Authority" as sketched out in the Report of the Departmental Committee was taken up by all the members of that Committee. Thus Mr Brooke Lambert and Mr Vallance, in their memorandum which is attached to the Report, wrote as follows:—

"In signing the Report we are constrained to say that we are not in entire agreement with the majority of the Committee upon the question of the establishment of a new Central Authority. We cannot view the proposal to create such a body and give it control over all the Poor Law Schools in the Metropolis without misgiving. The withdrawal from the Guardians of so important a function as the care of the children, and this at a time when the statutory experiment of popularising elections of Guardians has only just come into operation, seems to us to demand more justification than has been shown. The new departure seems the less necessary when it is considered that the greater part of the recommendations we have made are drawn from conditions already existing in individual Poor Law Schools. If the 'Exmouth' Training Ship be quoted as a proof of the result of management by a Central Authority, it should be borne in mind that the experiment was inaugurated and successfully carried out for some years by the Forest Gate School District; whilst the commendations bestowed on the Cottage Homes and the 'Ins-and-Outs' Institution of the Kensington and Chelsea School District attest the possibilities of local management under the present system."

The memorial proposes that the scope of the recent order should be enlarged "so as to entrust the Metropolitan Asylums Board with the duties of (a) providing for the children known as 'Ins-and-Outs'; (b) making arrangements for the technical training of children; (c)

boarding-out eligible children ; (*d*) emigrating suitable children to the Colonies ; and that (*e*) the Board should have compulsory power to inspect the children in the existing schools, workhouses, and infirmaries, and to transfer to their own care all children covered by the enlarged order."

We would remark on these proposals as follows :

As to "Ins-and-Outs," there is not the least doubt that the example of the Kensington and Chelsea Boards of Guardians who have provided a Special School at Hammersmith for this class, will be followed by other Boards. The intervention of the Metropolitan Asylums Board is not needed ; what *is* wanted is that the Guardians should be given additional powers for retaining these children should the circumstances of each case demand it. Only those thoroughly acquainted with the family history of the case can be safely trusted to deal with it in a suitable manner.

Has your Association ever considered the immense difficulty of defining an "In-and-Out" child ? At what point does it become an "In-and-Out" child, and who is to have the care of it until it reaches that point, and then how would the "*great* Central Authority" be able to determine whether or not a child should be entirely removed from the care of its parents ? Surely only those intimately acquainted with its family history as the local Guardians are can decide the question satisfactorily.

As to technical training, we acknowledge that this has not hitherto been as thorough in all the schools as could be wished. The early age at which the children are necessarily removed from the schools has been partly the cause of this, but the demand for these children—both boys and girls—has enabled them to be placed in the world with generally satisfactory results.

As to boarding-out, Guardians are quite free to board out in all eligible cases, and use their powers of doing so extensively. It is almost unnecessary to enlarge on the difficulties which will arise if there are two sets of inspectors of boarded-out children, while in the interests of the children it is surely better that each Board of Guardians should be in intimate communication with one or more Boarding-out Committees rather than that children from the same Union should be scattered about amongst the 150 Committees that exist. The change proposed by the Association implies increased expenditure, and, in our opinion, diminished efficiency.

As to emigration, it is the fact that Boards of Guardians do at the present time make use of voluntary agencies if they wish to emigrate children, and they are in a much better position to select those most suitable for emigration than any Central Authority would be.

It is claimed by the State Children's Aid Association that the child should have more individual treatment. But in the programme issued it would seem that their object is to break up family life entirely, and to make the children wholly what they are called, "children of the State." Whatever else may be said against the London Poor Law Schools, the family tie is not necessarily broken.

In conclusion, we need scarcely say that, while we would welcome any assistance the State Children's Aid Association could give in carrying out reforms (which Boards of Guardians are asking for), we must strenuously oppose their main proposals, because we believe them to be conducive to extravagance, and to be detrimental to the best interests of the children themselves.

Signed on behalf of the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences—

ALBERT PELL,

Chairman, and a Vice-President of the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants.

WILLIAM BOUSFIELD,

Hon. Treasurer, and President of the South-Eastern and Metropolitan Poor Law Conference.

WILLIAM CHANCE,

Hon. Secretary.

And on behalf of the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants—

CATHERINE SCOTT,

Hon. Secretary.

APPENDIX.

PRIZES, &C., TAKEN BY EXHIBITS OF THE WORK OF CHILDREN IN THE KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA SCHOOL, BANSTEAD.

1894.	First Prize.	Second Prize.	Third Prize.	Special Prize.	Certificate of Merit.	Total.
Carpentering - - -	—	I	—	—	—	I
Wrought Metal Work - -	—	I	—	—	I	2
Lead Work - - -	—	—	—	I	I	2
Tailoring - - -	—	I	—	—	2	3
Sign and Facia Writing - -	I	I	—	—	—	2
Shoemaking - - -	—	—	—	I	—	I
Solo Playing - - -	—	—	—	I*	I†	2
Needlework - - -	3	5	—	I	7	16
1895.						
Carpentering - - -	—	I	—	—	I	2
Wrought Metal Work - -	I	2	—	—	3	6
Lead Work - - -	—	—	—	—	6	6
Painting - - -	—	—	—	—	I	I
Sign Writing - - -	—	—	—	—	2	2
Marbling - - -	—	—	—	—	I	I
Stencilling - - -	—	—	—	—	I	I
Tailoring - - -	I	I	—	—	I	3
Shoemaking - - -	I	—	—	—	I	2
Solo Playing - - -	2‡	2§	2	—	—	5
						58

* Euphonium. † Cornet. ‡ Clarionet and cornet. § Piccolo and euphonium. || Oboe.

Exhibitions held at Sutton, under auspices of the Home Arts and Industries.

PRIZES, &c., TAKEN BY EXHIBITS OF THE WORK OF THE CHILDREN IN THE ST PANCRAS SCHOOLS, LEAVESDEN.

Turners' Exhibition, London, 1890.

1st Prize, Brass-turned Chess Board, Geo. Drawater (13).

2nd „ Apprentice Class, Turned Pulley Wheel, &c., Sidney Walker (13).

Herts Exhibition, Hertford, 1892.—Artisans' Class.

1st Prize, Ironmongery, E. Lane.

Special Prize, „ G. Drawater (14).

Herts Exhibition, Hertford, 1893.—Artisans' Class.

1st Prize, Hammered Iron, G. Sartani.

2nd „ Bent Iron Work, W. Spicer (14).

Herts Society for Promotion of Art, August 1893.

1st Prize, Joinery, Arthur Watkins (13), Henry Spinks (13). Their exhibitions were equal, so that the 2nd Prize was made equal to 1st Prize by the Judges.

Grantham Exhibition, 1894.—Against Artisans' Class.

2nd Prize and Special Medal, Iron and Glass Fire-Screen, George Sartani (14). Purchased by Hyndham Holgate, Esq.)

Blacksmiths' Exhibition, 1894.—Apprentice Class.

Special Prize and 10s. added, Blacksmiths' Work, George Sartani (14).

Cassell's "Work" Competition to all Readers, 1894.

1st Prize, £3 and Medal, for a letter describing what he had done at the schools, G. Sartani.

Herts Exhibition, Hitchin, 1896.—Against Artisans.

1st Prize, Engineers' Department, C. Hawkins.

East London (People's Palace) Exhibition.

Certificate, Lectern, Hammered Iron, A. Turner (13).

Herts Society, Hitchin, 1896.

1st Prize, Joinery, George Weldon (14).

NOTE.—These boys not being in any way connected with the county of Hertfordshire, have to be entered in Section B, which means that they have to compete with skilled artisans.

Herts Exhibition this year, 1897.

1st Prize, Hammered Iron Work, W. Turner.

1st Prize, Bent Iron Work, W. Jepps.

Others have exhibited from Shoemaking Department, and also from Carpenters Department.

SOUTH METROPOLITAN DISTRICT SCHOOLS, SUTTON.

Banstead Road—Girls' Department.

1896.—Margaret Mills, 1st prize for essay from Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; Susan Underwood, certificate for essay from Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

1897.—Minnie Oakes, prize for essay from Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; Mabel Woodcock, certificate for essay from Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

1895.—Home Arts and Industries Exhibition at Sutton—Margaret Harris, prize, penmanship; Phillippa Moore, prize, needlework.

1892.—Martha Lawrence, Queen's Scholarship; Edith Ridley, Queen's Scholarship.

1894.—Anna Grant, Queen's Scholarship.

1895.—Annie Cooper, Queen's Scholarship.

These schools have an exhibit of needlework in the Victorian Era Exhibition now open at Earl's Court.

Three old Sutton girls have just been accepted for training as hospital nurses.

SOUTH METROPOLITAN DISTRICT SCHOOLS.

Positions attained by some of the girls sent out from the Girls' School at Banstead Road.

A. W.—Assistant Mistress, L.S.B. Salary, £115.

E. B.—Assistant Mistress, L.S.B. Salary, £103. 17s. 6d.

A. H. E.—Kept her first place nine years. Now Assistant Nurse in School Infirmary.

M. L.—Passed from School to Truro Training College. Now Assistant Mistress, L.S.B.

F. L.—Sister to above. Now a Trained Hospital Nurse.

A. F.—A Trained Hospital Nurse. Now taking Private Cases.

E. N.—Left School fifteen years ago. Now Manager of Hotel.

M. M.—Formerly Pupil Teacher. Now Mistress in Poor Law School.

A. M.—Sister of above. Nurse in Poor Law School.

R. M.—Teacher in Church Elementary School.

G. M.—Sister of above. Telegraph Clerk.

F. G.—Still-room maid in Nobleman's family.

S. C.—Parlour-maid to Lady of Title.

M. H.—Twenty years in first place. Mistress writes, "A faithful servant."

SOUTH METROPOLITAN DISTRICT SCHOOLS, SUTTON.

Brighton Road—Boys' Department.

Prizes and Certificates won at the 1895 Exhibition of the Home Arts and Industries :—

<i>Trades.</i>	<i>Names.</i>	<i>Awards.</i>
Tailoring - - - - -	F. Stocker - - - - -	1st Prize.
" - - - - -	G. Pearl - - - - -	2nd Prize.
" - - - - -	M. Keefe - - - - -	Certificate.
" - - - - -	G. Heath - - - - -	Do.
" - - - - -	G. Bell - - - - -	Do.
" - - - - -	S. Dewhurst - - - - -	Do.
" - - - - -	J. Shearing - - - - -	Do.
" - - - - -	A. Rhodes - - - - -	Do.
Baking - - - - -	S. W. Wright - - - - -	1st Prize.
" - - - - -	J. Chapple - - - - -	2nd Prize.
" - - - - -	A. Earnshaw - - - - -	3rd Prize.
Carpentering and Joinery - - - - -	F. Sunter - - - - -	1st Prize.
" " - - - - -	A. W. Foote - - - - -	2nd Prize.
" " - - - - -	W. Pavitt - - - - -	2nd Prize.
Bootmaking - - - - -	D. Herbert - - - - -	2nd Prize.
" - - - - -	J. C. Dansie - - - - -	Certificate.
" - - - - -	W. Weathercote - - - - -	Do.
Engineers - - - - -	W. Hurley - - - - -	Do.
" - - - - -	F. Docker - - - - -	Do.
" - - - - -	E. Moard - - - - -	Do.
" - - - - -	W. Underwood - - - - -	Do.

CENTRAL LONDON DISTRICT SCHOOLS, HANWELL.

There are at the present time nine old boys from these schools holding the position of Bandmaster in various regiments, besides two Drum-Majors, one solo cornet in Royal Marine Artillery, and one solo euphonium in Scots Guards.

An old Hanwell boy is now one of H.M. Assistant-Inspectors of Schools.

FOREST GATE DISTRICT SCHOOLS.

J. G. went into army ; short service. Left, married, and is now Vice-Chairman of the School Board for his district, not a small one, and manager of chemical works.

T. S. to army. Still serving, and now Bandmaster in his regiment. A gentleman in appearance and manner.

J. F. to army. Still serving, and now Bandmaster. Very clever teacher, and a gentleman.

E. W., Bandmaster in Militia ; Vice-Chairman of his Town Council (one of the largest seaports) ; hotelkeeper and part lessee of pier.

M. E., Collector and Bandmaster to local band at B——. Called on Superintendent of Forest Gate School, 28th June, as he was up in town for Jubilee. Handsome fellow, and gentleman in manners.

M. H., now a clothier and outfitter in London, has two large shops. Married his master's daughter.

M. B. was steward on a large liner. Now a cheesemonger in a fair way of business.

Two brothers G., one a foreman in factory, one leading hand —both very good musicians, abstainers, and doing well.

H., Bandmaster. Gazetted to his regiment. Trained at the schools and Kneller Hall.

STRAND UNION SCHOOLS, EDMONTON.

Old Band Boys now serving in the Army.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Regiment.</i>	<i>Remarks.</i>
3	1st Life Guards - - - -	Corpl. C. G., student at Kneller Hall.
1	Royal Horse Guards - - -	
2	King's Own Dragoon Guards - -	
1	Queen's Bays - - - -	
2	5th Dragoon Guards - - -	F. B. as Bandmaster.
2	6th Dragoon Guards - - -	
5	7th Dragoon Guards - - -	J. J. as Band-Sergeant ; W. C. and F. C. Corporals.
1	Royal Scots Greys - - - -	
4	7th Hussars - - - -	
2	11th Hussars - - - -	T. H. as Band-Sergeant.
2	12th Lancers - - - -	
4	14th Hussars - - - -	W. C. as Corporal.
3	18th Hussars - - - -	Two at Kneller Hall.
1	Mounted Artillery Band - - -	G. S., Band-Sergeant.
1	Grenadier Guards - - - -	T. M., Band-Corporal.
2	Scots Guards - - - -	
5	Black Watch - - - -	
3	King's Royal Rifles - - -	J. C., Band-Corporal.
2	Royal Munster Fusiliers - -	T. T., Band-Sergeant.
1	Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders -	
2	Essex Regiment - - - -	
30	Royal Engineers - - - -	A. R., Troop Sergeant-Major ; T. L., F. L., I. H., Company Quartermaster-Sergeants ; C. B., Sergeant ; I. M., T. M., W. C., R. J. P., and F. S., Corporals.
81	Total	

ST GEORGE'S-IN-THE-EAST SCHOOLS, PLASHET.

Eight old boys are now Bandmasters of different regiments, and one of a large military school. One boy is clerk in the Thames Iron Works, one in tea warehouse in the Docks, one in Marshall's the printers, one is stationmaster in the country. Two boys were sent to the army, and after a few years found themselves stationed at Gibraltar. They took the opportunity of studying Spanish, and in due course left Gibraltar for other stations. Years afterwards they again found themselves at Gibraltar ; they continued the study of Spanish, and began a little preaching in that tongue. They returned to England, took their discharge, and were afterwards appointed to do missionary work in Spain.

[Extract from Testimonials of J. M.]

“ Mr J. M. has served as Bandmaster 1st Battalion for fifteen years, and during the whole of this time he has borne the highest character, and is now retiring on pension. respected and regretted by all ranks.

“ He is a most excellent conductor of an orchestra. and a thorough musician. . . . The band has reached a very high standard of perfection under Mr M. At

Malta he was complimented by H.R.H. the Duke of Edinburgh on the performance of the band. . . . He is no less successful as a choirmaster, and is able to give instruction in singing and the pianoforte. . . . During his army service of twenty-eight years his conduct has been most exemplary, he being a thoroughly sober, honest, straightforward man. He is a man thoroughly to be depended upon, a thorough gentleman in his manners and dealings with others. . . .

(Signed) "F. W. R., *Lieut.-Col.*"

REPLY BY THE RIGHT HONOURABLE VISCOUNT PEEL.

GENTLEMEN,—There are certain points in the "Open Letter" which you were good enough to address to me with regard to pauper children which demand some reply.

1. You complain that I stated at a meeting held at the Baroness Burdett Coutts' house, on 1st June, that the children of the Poor Law Schools left them without having received efficient and good training, and you assert that the industrial training that the boys have received in these institutions is "quite up to the average." In support, however, of my opinion I have the evidence given before the Poor Law Schools Committee by the Chief Inspector of the Local Government Board, who states that he considers "the industrial training given to most pauper children is very unsatisfactory" (see answers to 16,706-7). In this opinion he is supported by the Educational Inspector, Mr Holgate, whose experience is certainly not limited, and who said that he was "opposed to the existing system of industrial training," and quoted a School Superintendent's statement that masters preferred to engage those boys who had not received any instruction in the particular branch of trade for which they were intended. (Answers to questions 15,582-3).

2. I am fully aware that some of the Boards of Guardians, conscious that it was impossible to domestically train girls by the mechanical appliances necessary in a large institution, have established small kitchens in which a few girls receive for short periods instruction in housewifery before taking service. By the necessity of the case these training rooms are only intended to accommodate a small number (some six or eight), it follows that the majority of the girls, sometimes numbering three or four hundred, do not receive that training in domestic affairs so essential to them in later life, which is received almost unconsciously by the working-man's daughter as she helps her mother in her daily tasks.

I must again refer you to the evidence of the Inspector of the Local Government Board with regard to this subject, as well as to many Guardians who have testified to the undesirable nature of the results of the training accorded to the girls. One Inspector speaks of the girls being "utilised in a rather slavish way for the use of the school," and states that the "work is made far too mechanical"; while the Educational Inspector reports that the girls who are at

industrial work in the morning “are fit for nothing in the way of intellectual work, they are so fatigued with the labour they have gone through.” The lady Guardians who gave evidence deprecated the labour as being in excess of what was humane or advisable. This view is substantiated by the action of the Local Government Board, which, since the formation of the State Children’s Aid Association, has issued an order reducing the hours at which children are permitted to labour, whereas the Inspector referred to their being worked nine, ten, and eleven hours a day.

3. In reference to your statement that the excellence of the education and training given to the girls is shown by the large demand which mistresses make for them as servants, I would point out that other causes aid to bring about this condition of things. The great increase of the class of persons who keep one servant, the extreme difficulty of obtaining maids-of-all-work, and the fact that those persons who apply at the Workhouse Schools for servants pay no registry fees, are all factors which keep up the demand. It will also be recognised that among a certain class of mistresses it is an advantage to obtain a girl who has a useful and new outfit, a habit of mechanical obedience, but few home ties, and no status of past references from which to demand privileges for herself.

4. You refer to one of the members of our Committee, herself for many years a manager of a large Pauper School, who has endorsed the paradoxical statement uttered by a lady Guardian of wide experience, that “the better the school, the worse for the child.” I venture to think that all students of child nature will understand that sentence when they recall the fact that the mechanical routine, the organised discipline which are essential when a large number of children are massed together, are in themselves destructive of that individuality which can only grow in freedom and flourish amid the opportunities of choice.

5. You express a confident opinion that other Boards of Guardians will follow the good example set by the Kensington and Chelsea Boards, and establish necessary homes for the class known as “ins-and-outs.” This Committee, unhappily, cannot share your assurance, for it is now fourteen years since the Chelsea and Kensington Board set the example, and no other Board has yet followed it. The Medical Inspector of the Local Government Board stated in evidence before the Poor Law Schools Committee that there were some 3,000 children in the Workhouses and Infirmaries, 2,151 of whom it was found were over two years of age. Dr Stephenson’s recent investigation confirms these figures, and it must be remembered that in addition to the children of the “in-and-out” class in the Workhouse there are many others who constantly pass in and out of the Workhouse Schools.

I may here remind you of the table kept by the Master of the Marylebone Workhouse, and handed in evidence by Mr Lockwood, Her Majesty’s Inspector, which showed that “one family of three children between the 3rd of October 1893 and the 19th of October

1894 were in and out of the Workhouse, admitted and discharged sixty-two times." Another family of four were in and out forty-three times in that period, and another had been in and out of the Workhouse between 25th July and 21st November 1894 sixteen times. It is, however, hoped that this state of things will in the future be remedied by the passing of a Bill (Poor Law Act Amendment, 1889) which has been drafted under the auspices of this Association, and which was introduced into the House of Commons towards the close of the last session. The object of the measure is to enable Boards of Guardians to obtain control over (1) the children of paupers of the permanent class, whose character or mental deficiency may render them unfit to have the control of their offspring; and (2) the children of habitual tramps and of the "in-and-out" classes, as well as (3) orphan children chargeable to the rates. It also gives power of appeal to the magistrates by persons who, being reformed, desire to resume parental control over their children.

6. You will perhaps allow me to point out that the figures you quote do not convey quite the impression you imply when they are taken in conjunction with other facts. If I understand your argument rightly, you draw my attention to the return made to the House of Commons on Lord Warkworth's application, by which it was shown that on the 30th of May 1897, out of 37,969 adult inmates of Metropolitan Workhouses and Infirmaries only 435 had been educated in Poor Law Schools, and you base on these figures the argument that in consequence "the training provided in the schools cannot be so inefficient and useless as had been alleged." But perhaps you will allow me to indicate that these figures are useless when compared with each other, it being necessary, if useful comparisons are to be adduced, to compare them with those figures of which they form a part. Thus, taking Mr Charles Booth's figures, I find that there are 1,292,737 persons (Vol. I., page 21, 1891) "in poverty," and this is the class of whom it may be possible that they should seek the shelter of the Workhouse. Of these there were 37,969 who were inmates of Workhouses on a given day, or one in every thirty-four.

Thirteen thousand (13,000) children are reared in Metropolitan Poor Law Schools, and the number of adults in Workhouses who had been inmates of these schools were, you state, on a given day, 435; this figure bears the proportion of one to every twenty-nine children.

It will thus be seen that the proportion of the inmates who have been brought up in the Pauper Schools is larger than the proportion of those reared in other ways, although the cost of their education has been considerable. The figures, therefore, in Lord Warkworth's return do not support your contention, but even had it not been so, I would lay before you the experience gained by many of those who labour among this class, which I understand points to the unreliable nature of their statements with regard to their past vicissitudes and experience. Too often these unhappy persons, knowing nothing is to be gained, and fearing something might be lost by a declaration of the facts, take pains to conceal them.

7. It is a matter of regret to the Executive Committee of this Association that you do not approve of the Memorial which it presented to the President of the Local Government Board, in which it was urged that the Metropolitan Asylums Board should be entrusted with the duties of (*a*) providing for the children known as "ins-and-outs," (*b*) making arrangements for the technical training of children, (*c*) boarding out eligible children, (*d*) emigrating suitable children to the colonies, and (*e*) that the Board should have compulsory power to inspect the children in the existing School Workhouses and Infirmaries, and to transfer to their own care all children to whom the previous order had referred, as well as to those to whom we ask its extension.

These recommendations were made after due thought, and with the conviction that those interested in the children of the Poor Law will come to see that a Metropolitan Central Board with, it is hoped, large assistance from local managers, can best deal with the classes above mentioned, because it will be able to classify and provide for the multiplicity of their needs with a completeness unattainable by separate Boards.

The necessity for the Central Body to possess some such compulsory powers as the Memorial advocated is shown by Dr Stephenson's recent report, in which he recommends that the use of the Ophthalmic Hospital School should not be optional, a recommendation supported by the fact that he found only 33.54 per cent. of the children suffering from active trachoma isolated, two out of every three afflicted with this highly contagious disease being allowed to mix freely with healthy children.

8. The object of the State Children's Aid Association is to obtain for the child more individual treatment, and to endeavour to get it placed in surroundings which as nearly as possible approximate to natural life. Your contention, therefore, that our "issued programme would seem to have as its object to break up family life entirely," is wide of the mark. In all ways would we wish to retain wholesome family ties, especially those between brothers and sisters, and younger and elder children of the same family. This object, it must not be forgotten, is and can be but inadequately attained in the Poor Law Schools by occasional meetings of an hour or two—and this, we understand, is all that has been allowed, and that the observance of discipline can permit.

9. The letters you print from some of the children to their teachers in the schools are interesting, as showing how readily children respond to individual kindness. Happily such evidences of kindness may be found in any system, but a few only of the more attractive children among the hundreds congregated together in the large Barrack Schools can be reached by it. The letters, however, are not evidence in favour of a system which has by its very nature to substitute rules, mechanical contrivances, and a machine-like order for the human direction, which is sufficient in a family or in a small home of six or eight children.

In conclusion, I would point out that the Executive Committee of the State Children's Aid Association has no intention in urging reforms to reproach those who have hitherto proceeded on a now universally condemned system. It must endeavour to obtain reform in the ways which seem most advisable, but it is ready to welcome suggestion, criticism, and the aid of all who care for the welfare of the children, and who are anxious to obtain for them the education which will best raise them out of the ranks of pauperism and make of them, without undue philanthropic protection, self-reliant and self-respecting citizens.—I am, yours truly,

PEEL.

December 1897.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

The PRESIDENT then said — Ladies and Gentlemen, I can assure you it is with extreme nervousness and diffidence I have accepted the position that I now occupy, for it is exceedingly difficult for me to hold a position which has been held by so many distinguished gentlemen before, and when I think that there are gentlemen on this platform who have devoted themselves to a lifelong study and discussion of the subject, it seems strange that a comparatively young man like me—because I can still claim to be a comparatively young man—should occupy a position such as this one. I cannot help thinking that it may be not so much out of regard to myself as from the endeavour to find out whether I hold some of those hereditary qualities which are connected with my name. It is perhaps a matter of some slight interest at any rate to those who are personally acquainted with me. The Ulverston Board of Guardians, of which I am now the chairman, is unique, in that I am at the present time the second chairman, my grandfather having been the first to hold that office. On his resignation from failing health, his colleagues selected me as their chairman, and I have continued to be so to the present moment; and I venture to say that it is on account of the great interest which my predecessors have taken in Poor Law administration that I have been called upon to occupy this very responsible position to-day, and I hope, therefore, you will be generous towards any deficiencies which may occur, because I feel I am ill qualified to follow in the footsteps of men like Mr Albert Pell and Sir John Hibbert.

It is the duty of the President of these Conferences to make some short survey—and mine shall be as short as possible—of the pauperism in the year which has just elapsed. I shall endeavour to state as simply and as clearly as I can what seems to me to be the principal characteristics of the year through which we have just passed. I shall not enter upon any of those thorny topics which are the proper matter for discussion at such Conferences. As far as I can judge, the past year has not been marked by any special charac-

teristics as far as pauperism is concerned. I shall limit my remarks to pauperism, as I do not wish to enter upon the broad though cognate subjects of poverty and misery. Judging from the statistics and the reports which I have perused, I venture to say that the year 1897, and the latter part of the year 1896, were not marked by any special features. It is somewhat difficult, owing to the different dates at which statistics are prepared, to make comparisons which shall be absolutely precise and accurate. There will be, of course, one subject to which I shall refer, as it has occupied the attention of everybody during the latter part of the year 1897—that very unfortunate strike which took place in the engineering world. I shall not go into the causes or the results of the strike, but there are figures which I shall lay before you which do to a limited extent throw a certain amount of light on the strike. To start with, I shall go back to the year last recorded in the Local Government Board Blue-Book, the year ending Lady Day 1897. For the year ending Lady Day 1897, the mean number of paupers of all classes, indoor and outdoor, was 814,887, and the ratio per thousand of the estimated population was 26.5. There have been only three years since 1849 in which the ratio has been lower, namely, in 1891, 1892, and 1893. Of the 814,887, the outdoor paupers numbered 600,505, a ratio of 19.5; the indoor paupers being in the proportion of 7 per thousand of the population. With the exception of the year 1892, this is the lowest ratio for outdoor paupers since the year 1849. These facts are well known to most of you in this room, and you will remember that in 1849 the ratio was 55 for outdoor paupers, but in 1897 it had been reduced to 19.5. On 1st January 1897, I find that 1 in every 36 persons was in receipt of relief, or 2.7 per cent. of the population. On 1st July 1897, it was 1 in 39, or 2.5 per cent. As far as pauper lunatics are concerned, I regret to say that the total on 1st January was 90,074, which was the largest total since 1859. On 1st July there were pauper lunatics, 89,110. There are, of course, reasons, which are no doubt known to every Guardian here, why that increase may not necessarily imply a great increase in lunacy. It may be through different modes of administration and more care on the part of Guardians throughout the country. It does not necessarily mean that lunacy is increasing at the present time. With reference to vagrancy, a very difficult problem which always comes up here, the vagrants relieved on 1st January 1897 were 12,312, which compared with 12,239 in the year 1896, and was the largest number on record. There were on 1st July 1897, 9,028 vagrants, as compared with 10,027 on the same date in 1896. But here again, as every Guardian knows, there may have to be deductions made from the figures given—the same vagrants may have been relieved in more than one Union on the day on which the returns were made; but taking the comparison throughout, and making every allowance, there is still evidently an increase in vagrancy. With regard to expenditure, it is almost impossible to make any exact comparison. I went a few days ago to the office of the Local

Government Board, and they informed me that they regretted very much that, owing to the large amount of work which now falls on the department, they had been unable to make out the complete returns for the year ending Lady Day 1897. It is hardly necessary for me to look back at the returns for the year ending Lady Day 1896, which are the last available returns relating to expenditure. Referring, however, very briefly to the past year, I do not know that I should be wrong in saying that there has been no considerable decrease in pauperism, though it is satisfactory to know that there has been no increase, but there are many things to be considered. We did not last year have the comparatively open winter of 1897-98, and there were signs of improved trade, and with the single exception of the engineers' strike, general prosperity. I will now for one moment turn to this question. Through the kindness of Sir Hugh Owen, who allowed me to look at a proof copy now in the hands of the Local Government Board, I find that there were on the 1st of December 1897, a total number relieved of 725,521, of whom 211,198 were indoor, and 514,323 were outdoor paupers; and on the last day of the fourth week of the same month, 733,689 were relieved, of whom 214,255 were indoor, and 514,534 outdoor paupers. For the corresponding periods of the previous years, the numbers were 728,762 and 735,194. I venture to say that as far as that goes, it is not unsatisfactory.

I will now make one or two references to what has been engaging the attention of every one—the engineering strike. I do not wish to enter into anything like controversial topics. It is not my object, and I do not think it right that the President of a Conference like this should do so, but I must admit that I was somewhat surprised when I saw the returns for the last quarter of the year 1897, because, with the single exception of the three districts, the North-Western, York, and the North Midland district, there was a decrease in the ratio of pauperism in every one of the districts as compared with the year 1896. When we think that for many months there has been one of the greatest dislocations of trade, which has affected not only that part of the country in particular, but many allied trades in all parts of the United Kingdom, it is satisfactory to find that the whole of the returns throughout England and Wales continue to show a decrease in pauperism. I will, if I may, read one extract from the Quarterly Statement for the quarter ending Christmas 1897: “On comparing the proportion of paupers to the population of England and Wales, it will be observed that as regards the first two months of the quarter, the proportion has only in two years been smaller than in the year 1897 during the preceding forty years, whilst as regards the last month of the quarter it was only in one year smaller than in 1897. In the metropolis the proportion of paupers to the population was smaller than in thirty-one of the thirty-three preceding years.” I was very much surprised when I read those figures, and found that, notwithstanding the distress which one believed was caused by that unfortunate affair, pauperism showed no signs of increase.

I do not think there is anything more in the way of figures and statistics that will be of interest to you. The past year was, as I have said, comparatively uneventful, and the returns from the various inspectors all tend to confirm this view. We wish, and every one wishes, that progress could be a little quicker. At any rate, it is satisfactory to see that there has been no considerable increase. One cannot, however, help being struck by the extreme variations between different parts of the country as shown in the official returns. As is well known to every Guardian in this hall, the returns continue to be very much the same from year to year. I do not wish to tread on anybody's toes, but I think it must occur to any one that those variations may be due to different modes of administration in different districts, and I think the stricter the administration the better the returns will be. I feel sure that every Guardian in the room has read the admirable book which has just been published by the Honorary Secretary on my right. I quite agree with the case he has made out that the strict, not the harsh, administration of the Poor Law tends to the good of the paupers themselves. I do not know if you noticed the very interesting articles in the *Times* of last year with reference to the sixty years of Her Majesty's reign. I am not going to quote them in detail, but if one reads those articles, and looks up the references to the various books published, they will understand the remarkable improvement that has taken place in the last half-century. There are gentlemen present with personal recollections of many of these things; I am happy to say I am not in that position. When one has an opportunity of considering the progress which has been made in every direction, it is gratifying to find that there has been also this great improvement in the administration of the Poor Law, and it is also satisfactory to find from the reports that in almost every Union, and especially those in the metropolis, more attention has been bestowed upon the sick and the children, and the latter has been a predominant feature, especially in the metropolis. You are all aware that the Local Government Board has issued orders with reference to classification and the treatment of the children. Those are too much matters of detail for me to deal with, but it is satisfactory to note that the tendency of it all is in the direction I have indicated, namely, that those who are in the Workhouses through no fault of their own should receive better treatment than others, and that there should be more classification.

With reference to the Conference itself, I have most cordially to echo the wish expressed in the Committee's statement, that the reports of these Conferences should be more generally read, and more generally taken by Guardians. I should like to speak of my own Union, and to make one suggestion. Never since I have been a member of the Board have I suggested it, because I have felt that Guardians had so much to take up their time in the routine duties of office, but I have often felt inclined to see whether it would not be possible to arrange meetings somewhat on the lines of these Conferences for the discussion of Poor Law questions. One of the things

that Guardians ought to do now is to carefully consider and thoroughly discuss the various reports and returns which are from time to time made. There are many of them, and Guardians are very hard worked. I confess that I had not read many of these reports until I was called upon to take this position, and if the Conference does nothing else it has caused me to read and make myself acquainted with these reports. Indeed the Conference could do worse than take the young Chairmen of the various Boards of Guardians, and, by placing them in this position, make them familiarise themselves with the literature on the subject. I am ashamed to admit, that so far as I remember, it is only the other day that I first read the report of the Poor Law Commissioners of 1834, and it has been already and will in the future be of great use to me. I am in favour of holding meetings in different localities and discussing these questions; though not of discussing matters of high politics, whether concerning ourselves or others. I should like to see Guardians meeting and considering these broad reports and returns, and discuss whether they could in the light of those facts and figures not put their own house a little more in order.

I hope that the system of holding these Central Conferences in London will be long continued, and that they will, like the District Conferences, increase in utility and importance. Well, gentlemen, I will not stand longer between you and the regular business of the meeting. I have said nothing which I can claim in any sense to be original or even interesting, and I can only thank you for the kind way in which you have listened to the few remarks, and that any deficiencies you may detect in me will be lightly passed over by you. Although there may be marked differences of opinion and strong feelings expressed on the various subjects that are coming before us, yet I trust that this Conference will be conducted in the way in which those in the past have been conducted, and with a due sense of the vast importance of the work we have in hand. There is scarcely any class of administrators who have a more difficult task to perform than Poor Law Guardians. We are dealing with upwards of 800,000 paupers at the present time, and when we think that that is upwards of five times the regular British army in this country, you can see the greatness of the work we have in hand. It is in many ways a weary and a disheartening work, but it is satisfactory to find from all the reports one reads how well the Guardians are attending to their work. It was feared at one time that Guardians might neglect their primary duty, but that has been entirely dispelled. We find that the Guardians elected under the Act of 1894 are working as well as those who were elected before them. I hope that this Conference will do something to add to the great and good work which has already been accomplished by those which have preceded it. (Cheers.)

The PRESIDENT then read the rules of debate.

The PRESIDENT then called upon Mr J. W. GIBSON, who read the following paper :—

CAUSES OF PAUPERISM AND ITS PREVENTION.

BY MR J. W. GIBSON,

Clerk to the Newcastle-on-Tyne Board of Guardians.

THIS is a very wide subject, and very difficult to deal with in a paper of reasonable length, but its importance cannot be over-estimated.

I do not intend troubling the Conference with statistics, believing that they would not be of much service in to-day's proceedings. I will content myself with submitting opinions as to pauperism and its prevention, formed during a period of nearly twenty-nine years spent in the administration of the Poor Laws.

Poverty may be due to many causes, some of which cannot be remedied by political changes, which too often proceed upon the principle of reducing men to a common pattern, disregarding individualism, the exertion of which very properly raises some men above their fellows. Experience, as well as history, teach us that comfort and prosperity do not grow like mushrooms, but that they are the outcome of industry and thrift. At the same time we must come to the conclusion that a careful study of the past will impress upon our minds the teaching of the Great Master, who said the "poor ye have always with you."

It is, there can be no doubt, true that we will always have more or less poverty in our midst, but that does not necessarily mean pauperism.

Pauperism is a growth, a kind of parasite which has its counterpart in the natural world, as illustrated by some plants which can only exist by clinging to and being dependent upon others. The parasite of pauperism impairs the vitality of our country in like manner as the parasitic plant lessens the vitality of the plant to which it clings. It should be remembered that "any system which secures food to the individual

without the expenditure of work is injurious, and is sure to be accompanied by degeneration."

Such systems create and foster pauperism. The socialistic teaching of the present day, which advocates that work, food, homes, education, amusements, accommodation for recreation, and every conceivable thing which constitutes social life, should be provided by the State, would, if carried out, convert the world into what might be described as a large Poorhouse. Free education has now obtained for some years, but the good results expected have not yet been experienced. This parasitic condition may, by misguided public opinion, be encouraged and developed, or, should better counsels prevail, it may be pruned and kept down. It is too much to hope that this condition will be completely eradicated. The object of this paper will, however, be attained if some of these parasitical growths are pointed out, and the Conference endeavours to ascertain the best way to prune them, and the best kind of pruning knives to use.

It may be observed here, that if it were possible to remove the causes of pauperism there would still be poverty to contend with, but it would be of such a limited extent as could readily be provided for without assistance from the rates.

Many attempts have been made from time to time to lessen the load of pauperism, which appears, on the whole, to be slowly but surely increasing. It is time, therefore, that vigorous action should be taken with a view to lessen the scourge which, if not checked in time, will surely imperil the vitality of our country.

Having regard to the many, comparatively speaking, vain attempts which have been made from time to time to eradicate acknowledged evils, which are continually coming under the notice of administrators of the Poor Laws, it is not proposed in this paper to advocate such an apparently utopian idea as that it is possible to abolish pauperism. At the same time it is surely reasonable to urge that our best endeavours

should be exerted to reduce it to the lowest possible minimum.

The principal causes of pauperism have been directed attention to and thoroughly discussed on many previous occasions, consequently, when dealing with the subject prescribed for this year's Conference, it is impossible to avoid going over ground which has been covered again and again. The indulgence of the Conference is therefore asked if it should appear to some that attention is unnecessarily directed to acknowledged truisms, the object of the paper being, it is understood, to bring the whole question in detail, as concisely as possible, before you, in the hope that there will be an interesting discussion, and that possibly some good results may follow in the immediate future.

There can be no reasonable doubt that the drinking customs of our country are, directly or indirectly, the most fruitful cause of pauperism. It is contended, that were it possible to abolish or even materially reduce the traffic in intoxicating drinks, or so influence the minds of the people as to induce them to abstain from their use, our difficulties would be at an end. This opinion, it is to be feared, will be strenuously denied, perhaps by some who, in their own minds, well know it to be true. They are, however, reluctant to admit this fact. They shut their eyes to the light, apparently in the hope that by some miraculous interposition of Providence the evils herein alluded to will not ensue. They appear to be under the impression that these habits are a comfort and blessing to those indulging in them, and that the inevitable results of poverty and pauperism will not follow. The testimony of judges, recorders, magistrates, and all who govern our social system is, that drunkenness more than any other cause is the bane of domestic happiness and the cause of pauperism, poverty, misery, and crime among large masses of the people. The discussions which have been recently reported as to the propriety or otherwise of allowing beer to the inmates

of our Workhouses on Christmas Day, and the reasons the advocates submit in favour of the allowance, are clear indications that the question requires to be carefully considered and dealt with firmly. The principal reason, the only one worthy of notice, submitted, when advocating the allowance, is, "that it is a shame not to allow the indoor paupers one day's real enjoyment and pleasure in the year." Many who use this argument know, or ought to know, that a pleasant day can be thoroughly enjoyed without taking a drop of intoxicating drink. These advocates appear to be under the impression that public opinion is in their favour, causing some of them to vote in favour of the allowance, well knowing, speaking mildly, that it is very doubtful policy on their part to do so. As no good can by any possibility arise from granting this *privilege*, why run the risk of doing grievous harm by reviving tastes which have been compulsorily kept under control during the previous 364 days of the year. It is not necessary to take up the time of the Conference any further in endeavouring to substantiate the statement that the immoderate use of intoxicating drinks should be considered the greatest evil which Guardians have to contend with.

Vagrancy is another fruitful cause of pauperism, and one, apparently, very difficult to cope with. It should not be tinkered with by attempting to modify our present system of dealing with vagrants. It is not necessary that vagrancy should be allowed to exist, therefore it should be absolutely repressed. Only the respectable *bonâ-fide* workman travelling in search of work should be considered. He should be provided for by granting him a ticket passing him on from place to place, until he finds a market for his labour. Lazy loafers, and persons of bad and indifferent character, should be rigorously dealt with. They should be driven from our roads, as such persons prowling about from place to place are not only costly to maintain, as they are at the same time a source of great danger to the

community. In order to provide for decent men travelling in search of work, it appears to be desirable that an office or labour bureau should be established in every large centre of population, maintained, if necessary, at the public expense. A scheme of this kind, if carefully carried out, would not necessarily be an increased charge upon the ratepayers; it would, on the contrary, in a very short time reduce expenditure, and at the same time rid the Guardians of one very serious responsibility. It is not necessary to further enlarge on this question, as it is obvious that the repression of vagrancy is a subject of sufficient importance to be dealt with specially, not overlooking the fact that the short service system in our army is responsible for a considerable number of casuals. It is submitted that the authorities should have more consideration for these men when they leave the ranks, after spending some of the best years of their lives in the service of their country.

The vice of gambling, in every form, should not be lost sight of, as being a prolific cause of poverty, frequently ending in pauperism. It would not be reasonable to deprecate this insidious habit among the working classes alone. It is equally reprehensible in any class of society, as it is well known that persons in very high positions have been reduced to poverty and pauperism by their recklessness in this respect. The upper and middle classes should set a good example, by discouraging gambling of every kind. This example, it is reasonable to hope, would influence those who so frequently risk and lose their hard earnings, knowing well that their families are, by their thoughtless conduct, being deprived of the bare necessities of life, and frequently driven into the ranks of pauperism.

The present methods of dealing with illegitimacy is another cause of pauperism, as the records of our Workhouses will abundantly prove. Time will not permit of more than a passing allusion to this question. It is submitted that were it possible to make the burden

and responsibility fall equally on both parents of an illegitimate child, such as by compelling the father to provide a home for the mother and child, and to fully maintain them, within a very short time this cause would be materially lessened.

When endeavouring to ascertain the causes of pauperism, the question is worthy of consideration whether or not the agitation which has been going on in our midst for some years, and which is increasing, in favour of lavish expenditure on the treatment and education of pauper children, is increasing or likely to increase pauperism. These children have a right to be properly fed, clothed, and educated, so that they may have a reasonable chance of success in their future lives. If pauper children are given superior advantages to the children of the artisan and labouring classes, it is only reasonable to believe that a premium will be put upon the neglect of children. Working men can reasonably urge that it is not equitable that their children should be reared on slender incomes, with numerous disadvantages, while the children of dissolute parents, sent into the Workhouse in consequence of their neglect, should have advantages far above those which can be given to the children of sober and energetic men, willing and struggling to maintain their families without assistance from the rates. It is not suggested that pauper children should be denied anything reasonable. Give them what is necessary, but no more. It is not reasonable to spend as much per week on the education and maintenance of one child as many men, with families depending upon them, when work is scarce, have to live upon without assistance of any kind.

Indiscriminate charity contributes very materially to the ranks of pauperism by encouraging laziness, vagrancy, and imposture. Thoughtless almsgiving is a baneful and pernicious habit, and is far reaching in its effects. This is a cause easily preventable. Could the charitably disposed be induced to place their con-

tributions in the hands of Charity Organisation Societies, or such-like institutions, sufficient funds would be available for the assistance of men or women who, from no fault of their own, are thrown out of employment. These funds could be utilised in establishing labour bureaux, previously referred to, and in enabling men to proceed to districts in which their labour is required.

Want of thrift should be considered an easily preventable cause. If men waste their earnings, and refuse or neglect to make such provision for the future as their earnings fairly warrant, then, under no circumstances, when they apply for relief, should their personal desires be considered, and only such relief as they thoroughly dislike should be offered to them. On the contrary, when men of sober and thrifty habits and inclinations, who have endeavoured to make provision for the future, come to poverty (this does not often happen), then it is a wise policy to give adequate assistance from the rates or from charitable funds, thus helping those who help themselves.

Free hospitals may be blamed to some extent for assisting to pauperise, by opening their doors, practically, to any one seeking admission. Little consideration, as a rule, is given, and few inquiries, if any, are made as to whether or not applicants for admission are able to pay for their treatment. Once a man succeeds in getting free medical advice or treatment, which he is able to pay for, by concealing his resources, he is fairly on the road to pauperism.

Want of employment is obviously a cause of pauperism. It may be said, how could it be otherwise? It should be remembered that steady and thrifty workers, male or female, need very seldom plead this cause of poverty, as their characters are sure passports to employment. Occasionally, however, through unforeseen circumstances over which they have no control, steady and industrious men

or women are thrown out of employment. Under such circumstances their characters should be taken into account, and they should have every consideration when, after exhausting their savings, they require relief or assistance. If, however, in times of exceptional distress which occasionally arise, or under any circumstances, the lazy, worthless, and depraved classes are relieved in accordance with their desires, and the Workhouse test disregarded, then want of employment will continue to be a fruitful cause of pauperism. If, on the contrary, the latter classes were made to feel that their likes or dislikes will not receive the slightest consideration when they apply for relief, it would be a strong inducement to them to mend their ways, and this cause would be reduced to a minimum.

Want of employment is, however, frequently caused, directly or indirectly, by strikes. This part of the question, so far as it affects pauperism, can only be casually alluded to, as it would, of itself, furnish sufficient material for discussion. When these preventable calamities occur, and relief is applied for, care should be taken to deal, not only mercifully, but justly, with all parties concerned, not forgetting the poorer classes of ratepayers and tradesmen who have, in addition to loss of business, to contribute towards the maintenance of those who, by their thoughtless and very often foolish conduct, are causing the distress. In connection with this part of our subject, it may be of service to submit, in a word or two, that interference by the Legislature, or by trades unions, in the direction of restricting or hampering free labour, is not likely to assist in removing this cause, viz., want of employment. On the contrary, it will be more likely to increase it.

Laziness is another very vigorous help to pauperism. It is not necessary to spend many words in dealing with this cause. It should, however, be noted that, in many instances, the freedom with which relief

is given is a distinct encouragement of laziness. Some, so-called, administrators consider it harsh and unreasonable to put any pressure on men of this class. The simple statement by a man that he is out of work is quite sufficient to excite their sympathies. Frequently, regardless of the cause, which is very often a deeply rooted objection to work of any kind, rules and regulations are stretched to the utmost extent in order to accommodate him. Very often these rules and regulations are entirely ignored, and relief is given with a tender regard to the feelings of a man who should be considered nothing better than a knave and be treated accordingly. The proper way to deal with lazy men or women when they apply for relief is, to relieve them in such a manner as will compel them to realise that, if they "won't work, neither shall they eat" in comfort.

Sickness and the loss of bread-winners of families are continually recruiting the ranks of pauperism. These causes will continue to do so until Guardians realise their responsibilities, and show, by the manner in which they deal with these cases, that if men will not endeavour to provide for the future when they are in health, they will have nothing but the Workhouse to look forward to when sickness overtakes them. False sentiment and mistaken kindness very often prevent Guardians from realising their clear duty, which is to prevent, not to encourage, pauperism, as "prevention is better than cure." Friendly societies, which are such potent factors in the encouragement of thrift, are undoubtedly the best preventives of pauperism arising from sickness. Men who prefer to waste their substance rather than devote a small portion of their earnings, in making provision for the future, by joining such societies, should be made to feel the consequences of their conduct.

Insanitary dwellings are sometimes blamed for contributing to pauperism. Such dwellings can only exist in a pauperised and thriftless community. Were

these evils eradicated, property unfit for human habitation would not be occupied. Such dwellings would then, as a matter of course, be removed or thoroughly renovated, as men able and willing to pay their way would demand decent accommodation, and the demand would create the supply.

Hereditary causes should not be lost sight of, remembering that like produces like. Heredity plays no small part in the growth of pauperism. Although it may be difficult to collect data in support of this contention, it would be interesting to endeavour to ascertain from some of our large Unions how far the ancestors of those on the pauper lists are responsible for their present condition. The result of such an inquiry would doubtless satisfy any one open to conviction, that once the barrier between self-respect and pauperism is broken down, the effects are far reaching.

The depopulation of country districts is responsible to some extent for many of our paupers. This is a question which cannot be dealt with on the present occasion, further than to point it out in the hope that something may be done to induce men brought up in the country to remain on the land rather than to flood our urban districts, already overcrowded with unskilled labour. The introduction of light railways, and the adoption of other means with a view to opening out land, at present unproductive, might prove of great service in abolishing this cause of pauperism.

Another cause of pauperism to which attention is directed is approached with great diffidence. It cannot, however, be ignored. It is not proposed, directly or indirectly, to condemn trades unionism, as men of every class of society have a perfect right to combine with the view of improving their position in every respect. So long, however, as their rules require that workmen in their respective branches of employment, irrespective of their age, capacity, or energies, are to be paid the same minimum rates of wages, the ranks of pauperism will be recruited. The reason for submitting

this opinion is, that when men begin to age they are paid off, and frequently become pauperised. Employers would, there can be no doubt, be willing to retain the services of such men, were they permitted to continue at their work and receive such wages as they could fairly earn.

Bad administration is accountable for as much, if not more pauperism, as all the other causes which have been referred to combined. This would at first sight appear to be a very strong statement, and one which could not be supported by facts. It is not stronger than is warranted. The abuses of outdoor relief, and the ceaseless endeavour to make residence in Workhouses unnecessarily attractive and pleasant all round, are clear evidences of bad administration. Giving outdoor relief to the following classes of cases is an abuse of the powers vested in Guardians, viz.—

1. To heads of families, under any circumstances, who have persistently wasted their earnings when in work, or of drunken or depraved habits, when sickness or misfortune overtake them.

2. To women of unsteady habits, or of doubtful character, with children dependent upon them.

3. To families of men in prison, who are often in much better circumstances and more comfortable when those whom they ought to be able to look to for support are in safe keeping. Such men are more often an incubus instead of a support to their families when they are out of prison.

4. To deserted wives and families, when it is well known that the wives very often by their conduct cause the desertion, and in some cases, sooner or later, are found to be in regular communication with their husbands.

Another abuse of outdoor relief is when (unfortunately, but very often unnecessarily) test labour yards are opened during periods of alleged exceptional distress, drunken, lazy, and worthless characters of every description are granted the privilege of test

labour, which should only be given to industrious and *bonâ-fide* workmen. This abuse causes trouble, expense, and ceaseless disturbances among the men employed in the yards. It is unreasonable to expect that harmony can possibly prevail when men, willing and anxious to perform their task of work, are herded with men endeavouring in every possible way to shirk their duty.

The abuse of outdoor relief is to a considerable extent attributable to the fact that some Guardians appear to be under the impression that the granting of outdoor relief does not pauperise the recipients. It is the worst and most insidious form of pauperism.

The safest, wisest, and in the end kindest course for Guardians to pursue is to carry out the original intention of the Poor Laws, viz., that indoor relief should be the rule, and outdoor relief the exception. In many Unions the very opposite practice obtains, with the result that pauperism steadily increases therein.

As to the treatment of indoor paupers, if they are better fed and clothed than the families of the respectable artisan and labouring classes, as it would appear is the desire of some administrators, for reasons best known to themselves, then pauperism will necessarily increase and multiply. It should not be understood from these observations that a niggardly policy is suggested. The aged inmates of our Workhouses and the children should receive careful but not extravagant treatment. The sick inmates should also receive liberal treatment, even if, as in many instances, they do not deserve it, as it is obviously desirable that they should, if curable, be restored to health as soon as possible, and rendered fit for employment.

The able-bodied should, however, be merely maintained, as it is an encouragement to pauperism to make the Workhouse attractive to them in any respect.

A not unimportant evidence of bad administration is the very apparent tendency in some Unions to allow applicants to practically dictate to the Guardians in what manner relief should be given to them. Guardians

should take a firm stand ; it is their clear duty to do so. They should inform applicants for relief, when their characters are to any extent doubtful, that “as they have sown so shall they reap.” A free use of the Workhouse test is a grand preventive of pauperism.

It would appear almost hopeless to expect that such causes of pauperism as drinking, gambling, and vagrancy will be abolished or materially lessened, judging from the little, if any, success which has hitherto been obtained in the crusades which are being continually carried on against them. Attention should therefore be given to the other and more easily preventable causes, when considering the question of the prevention of pauperism. When dealing with these causes individually, suggestions have been made as to the best course to pursue with a view to their removal.

Guardians have many of these causes under their absolute control, and they can, if they care to do so, abolish them. Guardians cause irreparable damage, when they neglect or wilfully ignore their duty in this respect. It is, however, futile to expect any great improvement so long as pauperism is dealt with without regard to the fact that carelessness and a wilful disregard of wise laws and regulations intensify and multiply the evils to which attention has been directed, and render the future hopeless so far as regards pauperism.

It would be well if Guardians, who have not hitherto realised their responsibility, could be persuaded that lax administration of relief degrades and destroys the self-respect of those whom they grant relief to improperly, at the same time putting a premium on vice, immorality, and laziness. A bright future might be looked forward to should one and all realise the fact that pauperism degrades, and cannot by any possibility elevate those who are brought under its influence. If Guardians continue to persist, as many of them do, in carrying out their mistaken notions as to their duties and responsibilities, then prevention cannot be expected, and

pauperism will inevitably increase and become more strongly rooted.

Mistaken notions have been referred to. This is a charitable construction to put on the action of some Guardians who apparently give way to popular clamour, even against their own convictions, evidently with the idea that their leniency and generosity (at other people's expense) is regarded as a virtue. They believe that they are raising themselves in the estimation of the public, and ensuring the support of their constituents when they seek re-election. Such Guardians do not always receive the approbation and support which they have endeavoured to earn, as persons who obtain their desires by imposture and persistence can have no real respect for those whom they have hoodwinked. Guardians should know better than the general public, or persons applying, or who may at any moment be applicants for relief, the nature of the duties entrusted to them. They should have the courage of their convictions, and act accordingly. If they dare not or will not do so, then the sooner they are relieved from their duties the better it will be for everybody concerned.

Amendments of the Poor Laws, or the relaxation of the regulations provided in the general orders of the Local Government Board, under which Guardians administer, or ought to administer, their duties, except in the direction of making these laws and regulations more stringent, are not required. Attempts to modify or relax the same should be strenuously resisted, if it should be determined to make special efforts to reduce and prevent pauperism. There is far too much liberty at present to squander the moneys of the ratepayers by reckless expenditure, and in carrying out sentimental and fanciful ideas as to the treatment of applicants for relief.

One recommendation, if adopted and strictly adhered to, would speedily and materially reduce pauperism, viz., that Guardians should expend public money in such a manner, and for the same reasons, as they

would expend their own money. Were this principle universally adopted it would be very helpful, but so long as Guardians are permitted by their constituents to ignore prudential principles, and to carry out their fads and fancies, it is useless to look for any improvement.

Prevention of pauperism, it is therefore contended, is almost entirely dependent upon administration. This contention has been abundantly proved by the results, which have been obtained, in certain Unions, by energetic and careful administration. It is not necessary to give the names of any of these Unions, as some of them have been brought under the notice of the Conference very recently. If prevention is wanted, it is only necessary to follow the good example of these Unions, in order to attain the object in view.

The office of a Guardian of the Poor is a high and honourable one. It should not be undertaken lightly, but with the highest and most worthy motives, viz., to protect the interests of their constituents, and at the same time do a real kindness to the poor, by preventing them, if possible, from becoming pauperised.

If Guardians one and all would start from this standpoint, success would crown their efforts, without harshness to the really deserving poor. The deserving poor have a right to every reasonable consideration, but the time of Guardians is wasted, and the funds entrusted to them worse than wasted, and pauperism is encouraged and fostered, when outdoor relief is given to the classes to which attention has been directed.

Guardians should not administer relief as if the present time is their only responsibility. Consideration should be given to the future. A little apparent harshness, in dealing out justice all round, would have the effect, in the immediate future, of making their duties and the duties of their successors much lighter and pleasanter. The lazy, thoughtless, and depraved classes would, of a certainty, endeavour to mend their

ways were they assured that they would have nothing but the Workhouse, with plenty of hard work and not over-sumptuous treatment, to look forward to, should their conduct compel them to apply for relief.

The duties and responsibilities of Guardians of the Poor are very often misunderstood by the outside public, and Guardians are often adversely criticised when they endeavour, conscientiously, to perform them. They should treat ignorant criticism with contempt. Sometimes new Guardians immediately they enter upon their duties, apparently under the impression that they are heaven-born legislators and know everything, begin to advocate wild schemes and an entirely new policy on relief questions. It is recommended that new Guardians should take ample time to learn their work and realise their responsibilities, before attempting to upset the work or reverse the policy of their predecessors.

Uniformity of administration would help very considerably to reduce and prevent pauperism—not only uniformity as between Union and Union, but uniformity throughout each Union. Uniformity cannot be obtained unless Guardians all work to the same standard. The standard should be not only the letter, but the spirit of the laws and regulations laid down for their guidance. Uniformity or efficiency, in any respect, cannot be obtained without the assistance of good relieving officers, as they are the first barrier to pass before relief can be obtained. Guardians should deem it their duty to appoint none but men of intelligence and tact, and reliable in every respect, to these offices. It is a great mistake, and an evidence of bad administration, when individual Guardians interfere against the reports and recommendations of their officers when dealing with relief cases. The report of an experienced officer is infinitely more reliable than the report of an amateur at the work, with possibly a personal interest in the case quite apart from the necessity or otherwise of the applicant. This is not

an imaginary evil, it exists more or less in many Unions ; root it out wherever you can. Full and complete reports should be required from the officers in every case as to the character, antecedents, and circumstances of the applicant, and the relief given should be in accordance therewith. If these reports are ignored, nothing but disaster can possibly ensue.

If pauperism is to be prevented, the public generally should realise the importance of making a careful selection of representatives on Boards of Guardians. In support of this recommendation, and in view of the elections of Guardians to be held in April next, the following extract from a paper which the writer gave at the Northern District Conference in 1894, is submitted :—

“The principal reason why this point is strenuously urged is, that thoughtless and indifferent Guardians, and Guardians who persistently set aside all prudential reasons when they are dealing with relief questions, inflict an incalculable amount of harm on their constituents. Representatives of a like disposition and character, in other public bodies, may be extravagant, but their extravagance is not harmful in the sense desired to be conveyed. It should be borne in mind when selecting representatives, that Guardians have already powers enabling them to spend large sums of money in the administration of out-relief. Whenever the administration is lax, or upon wrong lines, the ratepayers suffer severely without anybody being benefited. On the contrary, excessive or improper expenditure by Boards of Guardians on relief is an unmixed evil, as it encourages the lazy and vicious, and discourages and demoralises the industrious poor.

“The ratepayers should remember that this harm is worked at their expense ; they should also realise that when laxity of expenditure has once gained a hold in a Union, it is very difficult to eradicate. Lavish expenditure by other public bodies cannot possibly

have the disastrous effects above alluded to. If large sums of money are expended by a municipal corporation, all classes are, as a rule, more or less benefited; and if a School Board dips deeply into the ratepayers' pockets, they have the satisfaction of knowing that it is for educational purposes. Should there be more or less extravagance in either case, such extravagance is not of a demoralising nature.

“With these considerations before them, it should not be a difficult task to convince the ratepayers that, however lukewarm they may be during the elections of their representatives on other bodies, they should be on the alert during the election of Boards of Guardians.”

In conclusion, it is again submitted that the prevention of pauperism depends almost entirely upon the Guardians. Care should therefore be taken that unfit persons are not entrusted with the important duties devolving upon them, and careful administrators should be supported and encouraged by those who have to provide the sinews of war.

Some of the observations in this paper may be considered too severe and critical. They are, however, not severer than appears to be warranted, as plain speaking is necessary if the Conference desire to consider the whole question on its merits.

I am conscious that the subject has been laid before you in a very crude, disconnected, and incomplete manner, but I have done my best in the limited time at my disposal since undertaking the task. I trust, however, that I have said sufficient to initiate a discussion on the causes of pauperism and its prevention, and express the hope that some good will ensue from the deliberations of this Conference.

The PRESIDENT next called upon Mr W. FISHER to read his paper on the same subject:—

PAUPERISM: ITS CAUSES AND
REMEDIES.

BY MR W. FISHER,
Guardian of the Poor, Gateshead.

IN approaching this subject we are ready to recognise that it is not only social conditions with which we have to deal, but also phases of character. True, poverty does not always carry with it in its first stages moral enervation. Numerous examples could be cited of the independent spirit manifesting itself under the cruellest conditions of poverty, and because this kind of thing exists it has been a custom with some to point with approval to those noble examples of self-reliance who, rather than be beholden to their neighbour, would suffer in secret the pangs of hunger and privation. We do not look upon those as degenerates. They belong to a very large class who constantly live very near the wind. Given the means of livelihood, they manage to struggle on day by day and year by year from hand to mouth, and are proud to be able to keep abreast of their narrow means.

It does not need high intelligence to perceive the effect upon this class of sickness, slack trade, a displacement of labour, the exhibition of a little temper, or other breach of the network of regulations, followed by dismissal. Untoward events such as these lead to further depression and ultimate deterioration. This is the class from which the ranks of the dependent poor are filled, and here I suggest is the true field of our inquiry. I am contending that in this large class of hardly-pressed poor we find exhibited some of the finest qualities which act as a bulwark against pauperism. But we also find operating against that bulwark some tendencies to undermine social order. Now, the most suitable place to begin the investigation of our subject is not in the Workhouse or in the Relief Com-

mittee. Those are the wounded in the struggle, and we are not slow to note their crippled and abject condition. We see a collapse of moral principle. But it is not the lack of moral principle that brings them before us, but rather the lack of material means. Abandonment to vice is not peculiar to the indigent, depending upon the rates. It is not because they are vicious, but because they are without means, that we are here to-day to inquire the cause thereof, and to discover its remedy. We see something more in prospect for a man than merely maintaining his physical existence, but that is not our present concern. He must learn the lesson, and advance himself. But what we can do, and ought to do, is to see that we do not stand in his way. One is as much a question of ethics as the other. I do not propose in this paper to lay any stress upon the man of narrow means having his glass of whisky, any more than the rich man's debauch. Drinking and kindred habits are not to be overcome by Acts of Parliament or strictures of Poor Law Guardians.

I am aware that the drinking habits of the poor, and the bad management of such resources as they possess, are spoken of as causes of destitution. And when we have it stated that in a Union like Gateshead, 75 per cent. of those who pass into the "House" come there through drink, there appears to be something in the contention. We may go so far as to agree, that it is a cause, so also is thriftlessness; but both are secondary, and can only concern the student of economics indirectly. Indeed, we have districts in our own country where drink shops are absent, and the people have been taxed for their sobriety in the form of higher rents. The fact is that the power to minister to our physical needs depends upon other conditions, and those conditions remaining unaltered, were we all sober and provident, the voice of the wolf would still be heard.

I am trying to distinguish the incidental from the

essential. For instance, Brown and Robinson are equal in incomes and other circumstances. Brown made provision for evil days ; Robinson, on the other hand, lived carelessly, and became an applicant for relief from the rates. It would be a mistake to generalise here, when we know that a large proportion of the people have not the power to do what Brown did. The point for us is not that Brown saves, or that Robinson drinks, but that the many are struggling in the face of conditions which form the social environment, and result in discouragement and despair, the forerunners of pauperism. I have said that qualities of the kind we all approve are manifested by those who are in poverty. It is not exceptional to find industry, frugality, and the true independent spirit distinguishing the very poor, and how are those plants of character treated in a general way. They are treated to words of praise, and to deeds of discouragement. Low wages and long hours at mere mechanical routine cannot long be an incentive to a man to stand upon his feet. Allow the toilers to become the victims of a military discipline in our industrial life, to become as parts of a huge machine, and you impair the principle of manhood. "Can men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" No more can you expect men to remain firm when they see the odds of life arrayed against them.

The practical aspect of the question under discussion is economic. Here at least we all share responsibility. If we are careless of conditions, or ignorant as to what may be the right conditions under which men and women may live together in comparative comfort, we are to that degree culpable. What I should set forth as the primary causes of pauperism are the private ownership of land, the tyranny of capital, and the extreme waste in the production and distribution of commodities. It has been asserted that the desire common to men is to be independent. This is capable of general applica-

tion. Healthy citizens crave not for charity, but for the opportunity to maintain themselves and those depending on them. That is a first claim, and not to be denied with impunity.

We know well that there are constantly in the labour market many unemployed; we have seen, too, that large numbers by their labour only gain bare existence. How is it men want work, but fail to find it, or if they do obtain employment they are insufficiently maintained. It is this pressure, ever increasing, this hopeless, bootless toil, that diminishes energy and sinks manhood. A man may do something for himself in a new country where he has access to natural opportunities. What can he do where an individual barricade bars access to those natural opportunities which form the first factor of production?

The most potent cause, then, of pauperism is in the appropriation of the land by the few to the detriment of the many. It is the root of the evil. It is the basis of poverty. It is impossible to separate the land question from the labour question. Wherever land is unused, labour is being starved, and poverty, with all its terrible evils, becomes unavoidable.

It may interest you to know that 7,000,000 acres of land, "waste and common," were made private property between 1760 and 1833. It has been calculated that, embracing all waste lands, we have in the United Kingdom 26,000,000 acres of waste land, of which nearly 8,000,000 are situated in England. Surely here is the outlet for the unemployed. If we take the two decades from 1871 to 1891, we find that the population increased by 28 per cent., whilst during the same period the number of agricultural labourers showed a decrease of 21 per cent. This exodus from the land is a cause of overcrowding in our large towns and cities, and has tended not only to their physical deterioration, but has intensified competition for work, and added unmistakably to

the list of unemployed. It must have been something more than our extreme reverence for "foreign affairs" which caused us to abandon our agriculture, impoverish our land and our people, and sacrifice a natural country life, to eke out an artificial one in an overcrowded slum. The powers which owners of land possess enable them to live luxurious lives upon the production and labours of the poor. One hundred and twenty-two people own five and a half millions of acres of land, with a rent roll of five and three-quarter millions of money — an average ownership of 45,000 acres, and an average rent roll of £46,000; and as the land contains everything that man requires for sustenance, it is not too much to say that the landowners practically hold the lives of the people in their hands. It is computed that about five hundred millions is charged annually by the monopolists to the toilers before they are permitted to earn anything for themselves. I notice this week that one of our north country noblemen has just *consented* to permit men to labour under the sea on conditions that he receives compensation for that material which the earth contains, and which labour alone can make valuable. It is this monstrous iniquity, this inhuman tax upon humanity, which must be abolished before poverty can disappear.

Look at it which way you like, regard the idea as "Utopian" if you choose, but unless you are prepared to deny the workers' right to live, then you cannot by any logic or reason defend or uphold the causes which deprive the people access to that by which alone they can live. "The demand that a life worth living shall be made possible for all, and that the knowledge, wealth, and energy of a nation shall be rightly devoted to no other end than this, is the true measure of the moral growth of a civilised community."

The production of useless and unnecessary articles, whilst a portion of the community cannot obtain even the bare necessities of life, may be taken as a waste

of labour, and consequently is another cause of poverty. If hungering and suffering is to be avoided, then labour will have to be engaged firstly in producing that which is most essential for the supplying of those articles of food from which alone true life and happiness can spring. You can teach and preach and moralise as long as you like, but until the removal of the evils that exist to-day, in the form of competition, and the monopolies which leave capital in the hands of the few, poverty must and will continue to be the lot of the many. Industry as carried on to-day is not based upon the wants or necessities of the community. An employer is perfectly indifferent as to the utility of the labour engaged upon. Production is carried on with a reckless disregard concerning the requirements of the public consumers, or the injurious effects the labour may have upon the workers. Observe the huge sums that must be spent in glaring, and in many instances unsightly, advertisements—in your own city, for example, young ladies being compelled, through poverty, to disgrace their sex by parading the streets, in hideous costumes, for the purpose of inducing the too easily gulled, and otherwise thoughtless public, to purchase articles they had never desired, and would they but take the trouble to understand the amount of human suffering that had been entailed by the manufacturing of them, they would not have. Selfishness, fostered by individualism, has taken firm root in the capitalistic mind. The introduction of machinery on individualistic lines, and the consequent displacement of manual labour, has not been that blessing to the community that under State ownership it would have been.

In some instances the displacement has only been of a temporary character, as it has opened out new channels, but I fear that many of the skilled workers have satisfactory reasons for disliking its appearance. The compositor has not benefited by the introduction of the linotype, the sewing machine has not improved

the lot of the seamstress. She can make five shirts now in the same time that she formerly made one, but has she reduced her hours or added to her comforts by her increased production? I fear not, and no worker in the building trade has been the gainer by machinery.

John Stuart Mill says : "It is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day's toil of any human being. They have enabled a greater population to live the same life of drudgery and imprisonment, and an increased number of manufacturers and others to make large fortunes."

It has concentrated wealth, and has destroyed that personal relationship that formerly existed between the employer and his workmen. The employer is more interested in the machine than the man. His private property is better sheltered and protected from the elements than the bulk of the workers.

Machinery has also concentrated the people, by compelling them to work in large numbers in factories, and is thus responsible to a certain extent for overcrowding. It has made the workman subservient to the employer. Formerly the workman owned his tools, and sold his products direct to the merchant or consumer. Now his only chance of living is by selling, not his products, but his labour to the manufacturer. It has undoubtedly cheapened production, and has thus benefited the community. But as the rich relatively consume more than the poor, they have been the greatest gainers. The income of the labourer limits his consumption, and confines it to those things which are directly traceable to the land. Machinery has only reduced the price of manufactured goods, and many of the articles of food which supply the wants of the poorest portion of the people are as dear now as they were formerly, whilst rents have risen enormously. True, by our system of free importation we have reduced the price of bread and clothes, but we have made it more difficult for the poorer portion of the community to obtain either by their own labour. The

knowledge that bread is cheaper is poor consolation to the workless and penniless man. What the people want is work,—work that will nourish and elevate manhood, not demoralise and degenerate it. Abolish, I repeat, private ownership in land, let the community own it and the instruments of production, so that labour and capital can be utilised for the benefit of the whole, and not as at present for the aggrandisement of the few. I suppose it will be said that if you make the State a pillar for people to rest upon it will undermine their independence. But the State at present undertakes to save us all from destitution. Has that destroyed the incentive to be independent? Why, the name of Workhouse is repugnant to the intelligent workman. It is the insecurity of work which depresses the workman. The worker appears to be always working on a precipice. Only a thin line between him and destitution. No guarantee of employment. No continuity. Always at the whim and caprice of the capitalist. The best results will only be secured where there is a mutuality of interests. This cannot be obtained unless the worker be assured of the full results of his labours. That is the only incentive to honest work. Where selfishness and profits are the predominant forces, where rapacious landlords extort monstrous taxes from the toiler for the liberty to live, where the utility of the production is sacrificed to obtain wealth, where the lives and comforts of the people are ignored, so long will poverty exist. The providing of the necessaries of the country must not be left to irresponsible capitalists, whose only religion is profits.

None know better than the workers how want demoralises them. Indolence breeds indolence. With the feeblest of opportunities we are expected to display the greatest of virtues. On small and irregular wages we must struggle to preserve our independence and self-respect.

Carlyle was right when he said that the hell of

which Englishmen were most afraid was the hell of poverty, and what is true of Englishmen is no doubt true of people all over the civilised world.

It is to evade and stave off poverty that we strive and strain and struggle and work long hours, at monotonous and uncongenial and oftentimes arduous employment, for a mere pittance, insufficient to provide, in many instances, the bare necessities wherewith to keep life in. Where is the man or woman who does not dread poverty? And how many thousands, nay millions, are existing daily with it gnawing at their heart strings? It would be no exaggeration to say that half of the poor men's wives are harassed to death in an honest and noble endeavour to make ends meet and keep clear with the world. How many of your wealthy people understand the pain and anguish of mind endured by the parents by the knowledge that there is an inadequate supply of food for their children?

No wonder we are physically deteriorating as a nation. But there is a limit even to this kind of endurance. You must not educate people, and then expect them to be contented for long with the miserable state of things that prevail to-day. "If society does not settle this question, it will settle society."

I have stated three elements in our social mechanism which in my judgment are conducive to the loss of moral stamina, engendering pauperism. No one will construe my comparative silence on the subject of improvidence and wasteful habits as either a condonement of those habits or a wish to ignore their significance as elements in the question before us. Let it be repeated, if poverty, and consequent dependence upon charity, were the offspring of degenerate habits merely, then I could have nothing to propose as a help to a better state of things. I prefer to regard as causes of pauperism those customs or laws which set a premium on selfishness. How many of our laws in the statute book are untainted with class privilege?

We know well that most of our legislation is narrow in its application, and regardless of the dictum, "That the worth of a State in the long run is the worth of every individual composing the State."

Just accompany Mr C. Booth through his "A," "B," "C," "D" strata for the sake of obtaining suggestions for possible remedies. At the bottom we have "A," a class described as "hopeless, helpless, city savages." If we talk to them, we will find that they have convictions, which, like all convictions, must have some influence upon their lives. Their most obstinate belief is that law-makers care nothing for them; that as with themselves, so with the ranks above. "It is every man for himself, and the devil take the hindmost." This is unfortunate; and until legislators cease to pander to individual selfishness and class privilege, and to direct attention to the broader issues of life and character, our subject may continue a problem for academic discussion, without prospect of solution. It is in no pessimistic view that I speak. We know that all over the country there are workers gaining an insight into the needs of the people and the measures likely to assist those needs.

The aspect of the "out-relief" question is healthy. There is a growing agreement amongst thoughtful administrators of the Poor Law, that while the stopping of out-relief will not abolish the tendency to depend upon charity, indiscriminate relief only makes matters worse. A more rational policy, with the higher purpose in view, is to secure to labour its due reward, not only in adequate wages, but in making better provision for old age than the Unions.

How often has the recipient of an already large salary pleaded for a little encouragement in the shape of an advance? Just so, it is in the encouragement of real service rendered that we must look for the diminution and ultimate abolition of pauperism. Mr Henry Fawcett illustrates the bungling of Relief Committees in the cases of two applicants, whose circumstances

were equal. The one had by careful management of his income saved sufficient to bring him in five shillings per week, while the other was destitute. Both applied for assistance, with the result of a grant to the improvident man and the rejection of the claim of the other, which is, so far as appearances go, an encouragement of pauperism, and a rebuff to the industrious and frugal. I would argue that it is not wrong to grant a modicum of assistance in the latter case, only, as you know, the granting of such relief means the infliction of a stigma on one as little worthy of it as the Queen's Prime Minister. One of the first steps in the path of prevention must be to devise machinery whereby provision can be made for the later period of life. This may be taken as an example of the redemptive method in its earliest stage. What, may I ask, is the old treatment of the disease of poverty? Is it not one based upon the assumption that the disease is due altogether to personal propensity, and in no part to present social machinery, and must therefore be treated to punitive measures, or a let alone policy. I am here to advance a theory opposed to that, in the proposition that moral declension is accentuated by the customs and ideals of society in so far as those customs and ideals bear upon the means of material existence. In quaint terms, if you want class "A" to rise through the layers of character above, take off some of the weights, or in other words, relieve the pressure. Let a tithe of the care and discrimination which is displayed in breeding horses, or a tithe of the invention exhibited in the mechanical arts, be applied to the adjustment of the social environment, and think you, that the face of these questions would not be changed? We insist that our national duty is one of providing means, and not to follow ancient Egyptian despots in requiring bricks to be made without straw. The cry for some years has been to provide work; appeals have been made to local authorities to employ men in one way or another. Such modes of relief are temporary in their nature, and

in no way affect the supreme difficulty. We think it possible, without any forced municipal or other measures, to give equal opportunity to all to obtain employment. The foundations of hope are in the treatment of the land problem, as possessing essential meaning to every man, woman, and child in the realm. We ask that land, on which peasant as well as noble depend for the necessities of life, shall not be subject to individual whims, caprice, and interest, but shall be so treated as to render inviolate the birthright of every unit of the State. A bold yeomanry and general well-being are preferable to an aristocracy of wealth. I beg to invite you to commence at this point, the rebuilding of the State, so as to eliminate pauperism. What is wanted to begin with is the will to do it, the way will then be made manifest. We apprehend the importance of the agricultural problems of our time, the necessity of providing an outlet upon the land for the surplus labour falling out of declining industries, and the making of our nation, as far as possible, independent in the matter of food supply. But at present let us give attention to the relation of land to the aggregate amount of wealth produced in the United Kingdom, and to its distribution. In "Problems of Poverty" we are told, and the figures are two years old, that the total wealth produced amounts to £1,300,000,000, of which he makes four allocations, viz., rent, £200,000,000; interest, £250,000,000; profits, £350,000,000; wages, £500,000,000. Those figures are worth pondering over in relation to our subject, especially if the family idea holds any influence over our minds. What relations do the tax and rate charges bear to those four allocations? I say nothing at present about the manner of division or the nature of the wealth produced. It is asserted that rent as rent bears no part of the burden of the charges referred to, which means that labour and the instruments of labour, and many of the commodities of common use, are weighted to a strain. We invite the employers of labour, who are enamoured of free

labour, to give some attention to this hindrance to industrial progress. It is possible to tax capital out of the country, and the people into the slums ; but you cannot tax land out of existence, though you may make of its value the curse of abnormal wealth on the one side and want on the other. We suggest the policy of relieving the burden of national and local charges as they bear upon labour and the necessities of life. We suggest that rent should be made to yield its quota. I need not trouble you with examples as to how the present expensive system of taxation and rating hampers opportunities of employment. Parliamentary commissions and papers furnish ample evidence. Before leaving the question of national income, can the sentient mind dwell upon the phase of life called pauperism, without being struck with so much poverty in the midst of so much wealth ? We know that very much of the value included in the national income represents so much wasted energy and ill-paid exertions. Those who have the power to command wealth may be ignorant and selfish, they may make unwise demands, and those who must live are only too willing to pander to the base instincts in themselves and those who employ them. We suggest the desirability of producing the most needful and the best quality of commodities, and the least expensive way of their distribution.

I submit these considerations to you as one interested in social progress, with scant time for the more subtle analysis of the forces at work among the lower strata of society, with some acquaintance with the depressing circumstances under which many of the workers have to toil. Many of the social and trade movements, blind though some of them may be, are attempts to reach a higher stage of life and comfort. They may be blind in method ; they are not blind in the judgment that human exertion rightly directed is capable of producing sufficient for all ; and they are not blind to the fact that their interests are in some

way identified with the submerged tenth. What we have further to advance is, that any order of society that depends upon the repression of the aspirations of the lower orders for its maintenance, is itself responsible for the circumstances which obtain in those orders. This is a deliberate statement, and we challenge its disproof. Are we in earnest in regard to our solicitude on behalf of the helpless poor? Then we must of necessity see the disparity in the distribution of wealth, and be willing to make adjustment. It is not charity that will satisfy an out-of-work artisan or a loafer either, but justice. There can be no approximation of justice so long as capital is made the instrument of exploitation, instead of the servant and friend of the workers. Capital used in the interest of those who employ it, and for purposes more in accordance with human need, instead of in the interest of selfish investors, would be one more advance of the crusade against pauperism.

My contention thus far has been that the causes of poverty are, so far as they concern us, economic. That the people are alienated from the means of production. That wealth is intercepted by a few, and is degrading in much of its nature and many of its uses. When we awake to the truth, that the well-being of the lowest is the same as the well-being of the highest, pauperism will be a thing of the past.

DISCUSSION.

Mr T. MACKAY opened the discussion. He said—We have had two very interesting and suggestive papers read to us. They approach the subject from entirely different points of view, but they agree in one point. They both agree, Mr Gibson insists and Mr Fisher admits, that whatever be the causes of pauperism, “indiscriminate relief,” to use Mr Fisher’s words, “will only make matters worse.” This, I think, represents a very important agreement of opinion on which this Conference may congratulate itself. In considering this question, we must remember that poverty is the primitive condition of mankind. As these two gentlemen have reminded us, it is comparatively easy to convert poverty into pauperism. There is in every

man a certain element of indolence, and the path of independence (more particularly the initial steps on that path) is beset with many difficulties. Mr Gibson has enlarged in some detail on the practical steps which Guardians may take to resist the tendency of the less fortunate members of the community to rely on the Poor Law rather than on their own efforts. Mr Fisher, for his part, has raised a larger question, which is certainly of the greatest importance. While poverty can be converted into pauperism by the operation of a Poor Law, it can also (and this is the alternative which we all desire to see) be converted into independence by the absorbent power of a well-ordered industrial system. Mr Fisher, as I understand him, invites us to consider why it is that modern industry does not absorb and adequately provide for the whole of our industrial population at all periods of life. There are two influences which we have to consider—the absorbent power of the maintenance provided for pauperism, and the absorbent power of our industrial system. These are the rival influences which we have been invited to consider. Happily on this occasion our paper readers, and I hope I may add this entire meeting, are agreed that, whatever we do, we must not allow our poorer population to be unduly attracted into pauperism. The school of thought represented by Mr Fisher is sometimes supposed to be in favour of indefinite relaxation of the Poor Law. I would ask the Conference to observe that this is not Mr Fisher's attitude, and I think quite logically from his own point of view. He has not attacked what has generally been called the orthodox view of the Poor Law, but he has delivered a very strenuous attack on the existing constitution of society, which, in his opinion, is such as to prevent the absorption of our industrial population into an honourable condition of independence. We might be justified in declining to follow Mr Fisher in this argument, for obviously he has raised an issue larger than can be adequately discussed at this meeting. Mr Fisher has argued in favour of certain revolutionary reforms with regard to the nature and tenure of property. Personally I may be of opinion that the present constitution of society, on its existing basis of private property, is inevitable, and that under favourable auspices it can be so developed as to lead to those ideals which Mr Fisher and all other right-thinking men desire to reach. I may further be of opinion that the supersession of private property by some form of collectivism is impracticable, and also that it would prove destructive to that discipline of human nature in which progress consists. But whatever our views,—in any case, I contend, this issue does not concern practical administrators of the Poor Law. As Poor Law Guardians we have power to vary the administration of the Poor Law, but we have no power to revolutionise the whole tenure of property. We must therefore be content to leave it as Mr Fisher puts it: "If society does not settle this question, it will settle society." His fear of this risk, I beg you will notice, has not led him to ask for relaxation of the Poor Law. He probably would agree with a well-known

French revolutionist who recently visited this country. Our Poor Law system was discussed, and it was remarked that this institution explained how it was that we had had no revolution. This, I take it, means, that but for the Poor Law, which has been administered as a sort of narcotic to the poor man, "this question would have long ago settled society." Personally, like Mr Fisher, I am content to face this risk, not because I believe it will lead to revolution, but because I believe that society as at present constituted is capable of indefinite expansion and improvement if men will abandon reliance on the Poor Law, and cease to waste time and energy over the chimerical solutions of socialism, and will apply themselves with thrift and perseverance to learning those arts of independence which are appropriate to existing conditions. I entirely agree, therefore, with both papers, that a relaxed administration of the law is undoubtedly a very potent cause of pauperism. I also agree with Mr Fisher that in many ways the industrial constitution of society is less absorbent than it might be, and that this fact is in itself a cause of pauperism, or what is the same thing, a hindrance to independence. I cannot, however, accept the particular instances which he gives. The position presents itself to me as follows. The poor man's will, and indeed the will of every class of man, is perpetually being assailed by conflicting motives, which all have their attractions. Men desire independence, but they do not like the effort and self-denial which it involves. Men like to satisfy their wants by the least possible exertion, or if possible, gratuitously, but they do not like the loss of social esteem which pauperism entails. As administrators of public relief we can do much to combat the causes of pauperism if we are careful to preserve and foster the influences which make gratuitous relief repugnant to the wholesome natural instincts of mankind. As men and as citizens we can probably do something to facilitate and encourage the effort and self-denial which are apt to prove a stumbling-block in the path of those who set out to look for independence. Drink and gambling and improvidence are, I am disposed to agree with Mr Fisher, secondary rather than primary causes of pauperism, or at least men's action in this respect is the result of causes of a very composite character. Imprudent conduct betrays a failure of the better motive, as well as the victory of the worse motive. Thus a man has a surplus of say 2s. 6d. or 5s. a week to spend as he pleases. He has to decide: Will he spend it drinking with his friends, or in backing the tips of the sporting prophets; will he use it week by week to buy a provision for his old age, or for his family, or for additional clothing or furniture in his home? Obviously his decision will be influenced by the practice of those who administer the Poor Law, also it will be influenced by the public opinion of his class, and it will be influenced by the general theory of life presented to him by leaders of opinion such as Mr Fisher, and for this reason I am obliged to express a strong dissent from Mr Fisher's line of argument. If ownership of land, the employment of savings in the service of capitalism, and

indeed the whole machinery of commerce as at present constituted, are the curse to society which Mr Fisher would have us believe, it is obvious that thrift and saving lose much of their attraction. Arguments such as Mr Fisher's go far to paralyse the motives and resolution which strengthen men in their efforts after independence and in their desire to reject the allurements of pauperism. Mr Fisher condemns the present organisation of society unsparingly, and he also holds out as an alternative certain distant ideals. Now if the methods by which he seeks to realise his ideals are immediately practicable, and if he can persuade his countrymen to embark on this experiment, by all means let him do so; but I think he must himself be conscious that there is no immediate prospect of this. I think, therefore, that *in the meantime*, as things at present are, we are entitled to say that language which condemns the recognised arts, the only practicable arts, by which independence is secured, is in itself a cause of pauperism. Society is suffering from a plethora of false and unattainable ideals, which are wasting in fruitless effort the best talent and enthusiasm of the country, and deterring men from steady perseverance in courses which experience has shown to be practicable, though undoubtedly arduous. In criticising Mr Fisher's paper, I recognise fully its good faith and its earnestness, but it is my duty to point out how irresistible are the forces which he asks society to obstruct, and how wide is the conflict on which he asks us to engage. He condemns private property in land. If land was the property of the State, we should either have to fight for it, or some public authority would have to parcel it out to cultivators. In that case the public authority would either job it for its own friends, or as at present, let it out to the highest bidder. In what way this would help or extend agricultural industry or benefit labour I fail to see. There are many agriculturists present. They will, I hope, give us their opinion as to the vast accession of wealth to be gained by manipulating waste land. I do not know what experience Mr Fisher has of agriculture. Gateshead is not, I believe, an agricultural centre. He hints, however, not obscurely, and, as I think, quite correctly, that if we expect "waste land" to give profitable employment to unemployed town labourers, we must introduce a rigid system of protection, and reverse the policy of the last fifty years. Does Mr Fisher realise what a blow this would be to the industries of Gateshead and Newcastle, which now furnish goods in exchange for the food supplies which reach us from every quarter of the habitable globe? If the system of protection was rigid enough, it might be possible to plough up the streets of Gateshead and reduce England to the condition of a purely agricultural country. This, I submit, is a policy altogether impossible and unreasonable, but until we make up our minds to this, "waste" land is waste land, and the cultivation of it is an enterprise which labour and capital will be wise to avoid. Mr Fisher, further, has dwelt on the evils due to the introduction of machinery under the existing tenure of property. Before we can welcome the introduction of improved

machinery, we must invent, so I understand him to argue, some workable form of collectivism. On this, as I believe, utterly unattainable ideal much energy of men and trade unions is being expended, to the neglect of the thrift and economy and acquisition of property which are required of those who wish to thrive under present conditions, which, as far as we can see, are inevitable and irreversible. Mr Fisher has dwelt in eloquent language on the struggles of poverty, but he and those who agree with him are silent as to the large number of happy homes and the widespread measure of contentment and comfort which has been found compatible with our present system. He is a bold man who asks us to throw all this away and to embark on an experiment—a hunt after shadows—which all history seems to show is utterly impracticable. To sum up—the causes of pauperism are, on the one hand, the false sentimentalism which makes the condition of pauperism attractive; that has been denounced by both speakers, and it is with this aspect of the question only that Poor Law Guardians have to do. On the other hand, if following Mr Fisher, we must take a wider view; the errors of governments and of public opinion, the delusions of socialism are without doubt fettering and contracting the expansion of industry. Heavy taxes, the burden of military and naval armaments, the impediments placed by trade unionism against the free flow of labour into the better paid industries, and the jealousy with which it regards that successful expansion of industry which is in itself the best guarantee for the ascent of labour, these, in my opinion, are the principal causes of pauperism. (Cheers.)

Mr J. O'CONNOR (Stepney) said that dealing with this matter, or trying to criticise the papers, would be almost as difficult as getting from Gateshead to Newcastle without a bridge. The Clerk to the Newcastle Board of Guardians came there to criticise the ungenerous attitude of Boards of Guardians who did not act as he thought they should, but it would be wiser for the Clerk not to become an advertising agent of the Charity Organisation Society or any other society, and it was absurd for Mr Fisher to propound the utopian ideas in his paper. They must deal with the law as it stood. The causes of pauperism were many. The short service system in the army made a great many young men grow into idle and indolent fellows. The fact that they had sixpence a day while in the reserve was an inducement to them to loaf about, because they had "the price of their doss," as they called it, in some common lodging-house in the East End, and they gradually developed the habit of begging. The good people of the West End of London were a great source of pauperism in the East End. He would suggest that if the West Enders must be charitable, they would be charitable in their own districts, and they would find enough scope in their own districts without condoling so much with the poor East End docker, because he did not want charity, he wanted work. However, it seemed that Mr Gibson had made up his mind that anything that was done for the poor was a

burden on the ratepayers and a disgrace to the recipient. He would ask Mr Gibson whether during his twenty-nine years' service he had not suggested an increase of salary for himself. No doubt he had, and he was not so thoughtful then for the ratepayers about that increase of their burdens. (A laugh.) He did not know whether there was such a thing as a common poor fund in Newcastle, but he would remind Mr Gibson that those who lived in glass houses should not throw stones. He believed in paying officials, and he did not intend to stint their wages if they were good and capable men. If they looked at Mr Gibson's paper, they would find that it had reference entirely to the "working classes." The ratepayers were taken into consideration, but who was the actual ratepayer after all? Who was the actual ratepayer? They were told that land did not pay, and that agricultural produce did not pay, and the last speaker said that he thought Mr Fisher had no agricultural knowledge. Well, he (Mr O'Connor) steered a plough for seven or eight years of his life, and he did not come to the towns for love of the towns, but because he was driven from the country to the towns—rack rent was the cause which forced him from the country into the towns. Rack rent which was never in any sense created by the landlord, but because of the improvements of the farmer, and because the farmer had improved the land, the man who never saw it, except when he came to collect the rent, took the benefit for himself in rent. He remembered when the land he worked on was let to the tenant at 20s. an acre, and he remembered that it was increased to 50s. an acre because of the tenant's improvements. (Shame.) Certainly the tenant farmers of the country are not reaping the fair reward from their labour and capital, but the idler in the shape of the landlord gets it all. This was his criticism of the papers; one paper was as impossible as the other. What are the causes of pauperism? The company promoting fraternity in this country was one of the prime causes now. Drink was a cause as had been stated, but the iniquity of the company promoter had been very nicely avoided by the authors. Horse-racing, with its attendant evil of betting, was also a cause; and if they wanted to improve matters in this respect, let the upper classes set an example to the working men. Let them take the beam out of their eye before they tried to remove the mote from the working man's. Working men could not afford to gamble, because their small stakes went to some swell bookmaker, who was not a pauper, but probably a pet of society. Some people seemed to think that working men must become paupers. Had they tried to make the children of the working classes anything better than paupers? Had they tried, as in Germany, to teach them trades? (A Voice: "Yes, we have.") They had, when the parents had been able to pay heavy premiums for apprenticeship. They grumbled at technical schools and technical education, and cried out that the rates were already too heavy, and that they could not provide technical education. The rates would be well spent if the youth of the country could be taught in technical schools. It

was better to give a man a good start early in life than to try to reform him when he was sixty or seventy years of age. Another source of pauperism was the fact that life in the Workhouse was a great deal too easy for the able-bodied paupers. As a working man he (Mr O'Connor) said a loafer was a disgrace, and ought to be made to earn his bread as hard as he possibly could. He would put the loafer in prison if he had his way with him, but the rates would still have to maintain him there. Guardians were often too sentimental. His (Mr O'Connor's) concern was all for the children. The children in the Workhouses could not help themselves; but the loafers, it was practically impossible to do anything for them, to help them would be about as much good as throwing stones at the wind. He had succeeded in getting several of them into employment, but after a week or two they spent their pay in drink, they got "boozed," and fell into the hands of the police. Every class had its defects. The upper ten had their blemishes, as they could see every day in the newspapers, and they could not blame the working class for having faults. He asked them to be charitable in their language towards the working classes, who wanted no charity in the shape of money, they wanted nothing but justice and fair play. He saw that that Conference would very likely be marked by a debate against trades unionism. They got very good things from Newcastle, but they had also got Colonel Dyer from there, who had done as much as any one to increase pauperism during the past few months by his inhuman treatment of men in closing works while crowds of men were anxious for employment. Whilst it was possible for works to be closed at the whim and caprices of one individual, so long was society in a rotten state. The land question was exhaustively discussed by Mr Fisher. They all felt that he was treading on the corns of some members present. If any good result was to come from those Conferences there must be better feeling between the delegates, and less criticism of one another. The best thing that Mr Gibson could do would be to put his ideas in practice and report the result at the next Central Poor Law Conference.

Mr GEORGE ROOKE (Manchester) said the Conference must be very grateful to the authors of the papers, which were quite distinct in character but similar in aim. He would like to put forward one or two facts in his experience as a Poor Law Guardian, which might emphasise some of the statements made in the papers. In a Board of Guardians with which he was acquainted, one of the most active and useful members was born in the Workhouse where he was now an able administrator, and that showed that it was quite possible, notwithstanding birth as a pauper, to become an independent and highly respectable citizen. Then he remembered also the trenchant words of an illustrious man of his own county, the late Mr John Bright, who said that there was a class which no one knew better than the working class—therefore it was not the working class of which he was speaking—a class of persons in hopeless poverty and dependence,

which he called the residuum. He (Mr Rooke) was afraid that, notwithstanding the arguments of political economy and social progress, that class would last for many years to come, notwithstanding the great changes and advances which were taking place. But that was not really a matter for the Guardians, who were very hardly worked, and had had one matter after another thrust upon them, and they should take care that their hard work was not increased by importing subjects for their consideration which did not really belong to them. He fully believed that one of the greatest causes of pauperism was the Poor Law itself, or rather the way in which it was administered. If it were administered in a lax manner, it acted as a downright inducement to profligacy, idleness, and want of thrift. They should administer it with an eye to the future, and in a strict and careful manner. (Hear, hear.)

Mr TAYLOR (Eton) said Mr Gibson represented the official class, and what the Poor Law Guardians would do without it he did not know. They looked to the Clerks for information and instruction, and they invariably led them right if they would follow with due discrimination. The official told them that pauperism was a parasite, but it was a parasite of long standing. There had never been a period of the world when there had not been pauperism. It was with mankind in the beginning, and was now and would be until the millennium. "The poor you have always with you" was a doctrine which he did not expect to see "controverted or abolished in this our day." It was not a parasite, because they could get rid of a parasite by cleanliness and care, but poverty would be perpetual, because if men were all made equal to-day they would be unequal to-morrow. They grew older and the world grew older, but there were not more paupers now than formerly. Pauperism was practically at a standstill, and though socialism was increasing it did not tend to make the world a huge Poorhouse. If they could get back to something like primitive Christianity, they would find that socialism might be a very good thing indeed.

Mr ALBERT PELL, who was cheered on rising, said it was with some reluctance he sent his card up to-day that he might say a few words on the subject. He had been so accustomed to address the Conferences that he feared that some bad physical effects might ensue if he were silent—(laughter)—and as his interest in the subject was as warm as ever it was, he would like to say a few words upon it, and to get back to the subject. (Hear, hear.) The subject was the causes of pauperism, not the causes of poverty. Poverty was often a most noble condition for a man or woman to be in, and there was just as much an aristocracy of poverty as there was one at the other end of the scale. But pauperism was an entirely different thing. There was nothing noble about pauperism, or in the sentiments of those who were not doing their best to repress it. One of the causes of pauperism rested with the Guardians themselves in bad administration. Why were they bad administrators? Because they acted upon

warm sentiments coming from their hearts, and had nothing in their heads by which to correct those sentiments. (Laughter.) It was impossible for them to correct it from their heads unless they studied the subject. He was glad, therefore, to find that the Chairman had taken up the subject, and it was evident that if he had not had a long experience of Poor Law work, he had mastered the subject by reading. The first thing and the second thing and the third thing for Guardians was to read. He would not recommend them Mr Fisher's literature, or to adopt Mr Fisher's proposals. He (Mr Pell) was in the singularly unfortunate position of being a landowner. He cultivated every acre he had, and was not embarrassed by tenants nor by wealth, and he could only say, if any poor man wished to become poorer, let him dabble in land. Mr Fisher had been careless as to the true meaning of the word land. Naked, unreclaimed land was worth very little indeed. The poor were in numbers by far the largest landowners. He represented a division of Leicestershire in Parliament for eighteen years, and knew the small landowners intimately; they were house-owners, freeholders. Let them not run away with the idea that want of land was doing harm in England. Now one or two words with regard to the causes of pauperism. Probably one of the cruellest, the most operative causes of pauperism at the present time was the "compound householder"—a man who rented a house but never paid any rates, because for the purpose of easy collection of rates the Local Authority contracted with the owner of the house to give him back 30 per cent. of the rates if he would collect them himself; and the consequence was that the compound householders did not pay rates direct, and they never got experience derived from instructive "consequences." A whole streetful of people might be put on outdoor relief, and it did not touch the compound tenant until rates got to such a pitch that the landlord was bound to raise the rent. (A London delegate: "Then you admit he pays the rates after all.") He trusted that where landowners could get rid of the system of compounding for rates they would do so, and do a very good thing for the Poor Law. Another cause of pauperism was giving inadequate relief. When an applicant, perhaps a widow with children, came for relief, the Guardians screwed out the smallest sum on which they thought she could keep body and soul together, regardless of how the woman might have to supplement such sum by doles from the clergyman and others, and perhaps even by the sacrifice of morality. As long as they gave inadequate relief they would not get rid of pauperism. If an applicant's circumstances simply warranted slight relief, he was one of those who thought it was every way better to leave such persons to the care of Christian and neighbourly feeling than to put them on the pauper-roll. There were three great parishes in London in which out-relief was almost a thing of the past. He was eighteen years a Guardian for one of them, and if the old Poor Law settlement had not been done away with, he would, if destitute, have to reside in the Workhouse of St George's-in-the-East—(laughter)

—for there was no outdoor relief there. They had done away with it by good administration, and a real desire to benefit the moral as well as the physical side of humanity. He was glad to hear that pauperism was not increasing. It ought not to increase, when in many Unions Poor Law administration was so bad that it could hardly be worse. What was wanted nowadays was that the first true principles which had been accepted in certain Unions in England should be generally adopted, fostered, and encouraged, and then they would see, as they ought to see, a very material decline in pauperism. He was old now and might not live to see it, but as long as he lived he would do what he could to further it. (Cheers.)

Dr J. MILSON RHODES (Chairman of the Chorlton Board) said he was not an owner of land, and he did not understand landlords, nor could he say how far the land question affected the one under discussion. Mr Pell indicated that there was a moral as well as a physical side of pauperism; yes, and there was a mental side of pauperism as well. Those who would go into the statistics could not fail to come to the conclusion that education played a very large part in regard to pauperism. Mr Gibson seemed to be disappointed with the results of education. He (Dr Rhodes) did not know what Mr Gibson had expected, because if they would take the marriage returns, and ascertain the number of persons signing by “mark” now and formerly, they would find that it had decreased most remarkably, and that just in the same ratio pauperism had also declined. The class of able-bodied paupers, the class that Guardians all dreaded, had gone down from 13 to 3 per cent., and why? Because of education. They had not yet had time to find out the full effects of the Education Acts. Some time ago he made an analysis of the returns, and the ages of the paupers conclusively established that proposition, and also the fact that pauperism was chiefly found amongst the unskilled labourers. There was no room for the ignorant unskilled labourer. The machine could do his work, and do it a deal better than the labourer could. The British pocket-interest as well as the interest of the individual would be best studied by making every child a skilled worker in future. The higher technical skill of the workers would amply repay the ratepayers. Mr Gibson spoke of heredity as a great cause of pauperism. If there was a man in England capable of speaking on heredity, it was his friend Mr Alexander MacDougall, of the Manchester Board, who some years ago made an inquiry into about three hundred cases in the Manchester Workhouse, and he found that there were only three cases of hereditary pauperism. Mr MacDougall was so much astonished that he carried on his researches among the whole of the three thousand cases in the Manchester Union, and he found that only one per cent. of the cases could be put down to heredity. There was also illegitimacy, not a pleasant subject, but one that they had to deal with; and he (Dr Rhodes) asserted that it was not so much illegitimacy as sexual immorality which was the cause of a great many paupers. Take the

number of women with illegitimate children, take the women of lost character without children, the women whose husbands have left them, the number of children suffering from syphilitic diseases, and lastly, the "lock" cases, and they would see at once what he meant. A great many of these cases arose from insanitary conditions of life. There was one district in Manchester where the death-rate was fifty per thousand per annum. How could people gain independence when they were continually subject to sickness to that extent? It was the interest of the ratepayers to see that the people were compelled to live under decent sanitary conditions. Every penny expended in promoting the health of the people would be well repaid by the reduction of pauperism in the future. (Cheers.)

Dr GOMER LEWIS (Swansea) said they were not there on political points at all, but striving to amend the Poor Law. (No, no.) Very well then. Mr Pell had been saying Guardians were too sentimental, and that they should exert more head power. That remark made the words of the Apostle come to him, that "though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, without charity I am nothing." Something between Mr Gibson and Mr Fisher would be an ideal Poor Law Guardian. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) He attended the Poor Law Conference at Langlands Bay (Swansea) last May, and heard Mr Lleufer Thomas read a paper on the Welsh agricultural labourer, and ask, "Where could the labourer die but in the Workhouse?" He could not pay for his club or provide for old age. Did they blame the farmer? He (Dr Lewis) did not. But they would say, "Whom do you blame?" He blamed the landlords. Perhaps that cry was not very popular just at present, but it would come. High rents were the evil. He was a farmer's son. It was all very well for gentlemen like Mr Gibson to dictate how the work should be carried out, but he (the speaker) knew the work as well as Mr Gibson did. It was not, "Do you understand the Poor Law?" but, "Do you understand the work of relieving of poor?" that was the question they should ask themselves. Understand the work of relieving the poor first, and have some sympathy with the people. In Swansea, with about 150,000 people, they had about 1,000 receiving indoor relief, and about 5,000 getting outdoor relief, but what did it cost? Not as much as the salaries of seven or eight officials. When a widow applied for relief, they gave her, so he understood, eighteenpence for herself and the same for each child. Would they like to try to exist on eighteenpence a week? There was no scale quoted when they were considering the salaries of clerks and relieving officers and other officials. Having referred with extreme warmth to the question of the enclosure of common lands, Dr Lewis said it was all very well to say people ought to have plenty of land. He had not an inch himself. Some day he would get about two yards, and he was not going to give it back. He made no apology for his English, for he was sure he could speak English a great deal better than any of his hearers could speak Welsh. (Laughter and applause.)

Mr ELLIOTT (Leighton Buzzard) said he was only a '94 Guardian. Gambling was a great cause of pauperism. He had been a gambler himself, but left off twenty-nine years ago as an example to others. There were now three gamblers in his Union who used to gamble with him. Drink was also a cause of pauperism. He had also been a drinker. He left off drinking and began thinking, and therefore he had not died in the Workhouse. (Laughter.) Tramps ought to have something warm for breakfast—(cries of "Question," and the speaker left the platform, after a protest, amid much laughter).

Mr J. G. TAILLY (Buckingham) said he hoped that they would keep as near the question as possible. (Hear, hear.) They started with the assumption that most people who came on the rates had had an opportunity of keeping off them. That was not a correct idea. He was glad to notice that Mr Gibson had modified his view on that point as compared with one he expressed two years ago at the Central Conference. He did not think that Guardians encouraged thrift as much as they might. He was delighted to hear Mr Pell plead for adequate relief. In his opinion the aged poor should be allowed to supplement the relief, if they could, by such work as they might be capable of doing. (No, no.)

Mr LEACH (Rochdale) said Dr Lewis asked whether they understood what the Poor Law was. Mr Gibson at any rate had shown that he knew what it was. The principle of English Poor Law was that there should be no relief from the common fund where there was not destitution, and another principle which must not be lost sight of, because it was a fundamental principle, was that where they discovered destitution they should carefully inquire into the measure and the character of their relief, so that the recipient of it should not be placed in a better position than a man who did not fall on the rates at all. He was inclined to think that, leaving on one side the causes of pauperism which they could not control, there were many things which they could alter, and that right speedily. Guardians often had a doubt as to whether there was actual destitution existing, and said, Let us err on the side of mercy and economy, and grant out-relief. Was out-relief under such circumstances either merciful or economical? It was most hurtful not only to the recipient, but in scores of cases, and they all knew of cases where, when a Workhouse order had been subsequently offered as a test, it had been indignantly, and he might say, indecently, refused and thrown back at the Board. Another cause of pauperism was indiscriminate charity, which enabled worthless individuals to get a good living and scorn honest labour.

The Rev. R. J. TACON (East and West Flegg) said some people thought that currency reform might remove a cause of pauperism; others that large families was a cause, but that was beyond remedy. (Laughter.) Intemperance and idleness were fruitful causes of pauperism. Mr Fisher had spoken about the land. He (the speaker) had 1,200 acres of land on hand, and he would make this offer to Mr Fisher and Dr Lewis, that they should have it rent free if they

would pay the rates, taxes, and tithe of it. He hoped they would take the next train down. The land was theirs on the terms stated. (Cheers and laughter.)

Mr G. DAVIES (Prescot) "deprecated any recriminations between landlords and the working classes." The social system was the outcome of centuries of slow development. The inculcation of habits of thrift was at the root of the question now under discussion. He himself went to work in the mines when he was $7\frac{1}{2}$ years old; and the first time he visited London, he tramped it, and spent his first night in the metropolis out in Regent's Park.

Mr G. E. LLOYD BAKER (Wheatenhurst, and Hon. Secretary of the West Midland District Poor Law Conferences) said they were all impressed with what the Lord Mayor had that morning said to the effect that they wanted to raise the people, not to degrade them. One of the Lord Mayor's remedies was that they should no longer call certain people "paupers." But he could not agree with him or follow him in that respect. Whatever discredit there was lay in the fact and not in the name of pauperism. So far as out-relief could be checked, so far would the condition of the poor be improved. Out-relief not only pauperised the recipient but his neighbours. In his own parish they were five miles from the Union, and when persons got there they found the Guardians very reluctant to grant outdoor relief. With a population of five hundred people there were only two men in the Workhouse, and only two old people receiving out-relief. He regretted that they were, for he believed that if they were not their families would keep them in a much better position. The ordinary labourer in his (the speaker's) district scorned the idea of his relatives receiving relief. When the Guardians were too free with out-relief they weakened the ardour of those better and stronger men. That was in Gloucestershire, where wages were not as good as in the North of England. There was very little outward sign of poverty, and the people seemed to be getting better off every day. It seemed hard at first to refuse out-relief in certain cases, but he was very much struck recently with the words of a lady who had devoted her life to improving the condition of the poor, that a long experience had convinced her that "out-relief ought to be abandoned as being cruel to the poor." It should be kept down to the narrowest limits. It should be regarded as a very dangerous medicine, to be used only in the most difficult cases. Indiscriminate charity—not, of course, all charity—should be put down. As to Mr Fisher's remarks on the land question, he would like to say a great deal, but fifty minutes would hardly suffice for the purpose, to say nothing of five minutes. As to vagrancy, he thought it would be a good thing if more relief were given them, in the shape of extra meals, for many of the people who now helped the tramps would cease to do so if they knew that the tramps were receiving three good plain meals a day. (Hear, hear.)

Mr W. CROOKS, L.C.C. (Poplar) said some of the causes laid down as those of pauperism were very wide of the mark. Clerks to

Boards of Guardians might know much about the Poor Law, but they knew very little about the poor. If they took the trouble to look at the last Local Government Board report, they would find that there were £23,000,000 collected as poor rate, and that the actual amount spent in relief of the poor was only about £5,000,000.* They were told that that was very degrading; but the other payments out of the poor rate were not so regarded—superannuation and pensions and big “screws” did not count. The Essex landowner offered his land rent free if people would pay the rates, taxes, and tithe. Why should they pay the tithe to keep a certain class of persons in idleness? The land might be poor, but the poor were crying for bread, and ought to have the chance of earning it. He knew all about land in London, and that it increased in value four millions every four years, every penny of which went into the landlords’ pockets, without their contributing anything to help the occupying ratepayer. How could they expect healthy, moral, and physical fibre in the children of London when they were reared in the slums? The death-rate in one slum area in Whitechapel exceeded fifty per thousand per annum. They ought to attend to the housing of the working classes, and give them dwellings they would be proud of, instead of places that they were glad to get away from, and go to the public-houses for fresh air. (Laughter.) It was no laughing matter. The poor wretches had to choose between the public-house and the filthy dens provided by the landlords. He emphatically denied that trades unions were the causes of pauperism. On the contrary, the trades unions had organised men so that they could get fair wages and live decently. As to Mr Pell, go to his model parish of St George’s-in-the-East, and walk through it, and see its squalid misery, where bribery and corruption could determine any election. (“Question.”) The question was the cause of pauperism, and the people of St George’s-in-the-East were so poor they were glad to accept soup and blankets from anybody. (“Question” and “Time.”) Had his five minutes expired? It had: then to the Chairman, obedience; to the audience, defiance. (Protests and laughter.)

* [NOTE BY EDITOR.—The actual figures of expenditure on relief to the poor for the year ended at Lady Day 1896, according to the last Report of the Local Government Board (p. 387) are as follows :—

In-maintenance	£2,254,350
Out-relief	2,644,650
Maintenance of lunatics in asylums and licensed houses .	1,556,133
Workhouse and other loans repaid and interest thereon .	738,237
Salaries and rations of officers	1,739,264
Other expenses of or immediately connected with relief .	1,556,891
Total	£10,489,525

The balance of about £13,000,000 is in respect of expenditure unconnected with relief of the poor, but includes a sum of £695,861 for “salaries, poundage, and superannuation allowances of parochial officers,” with various odd items.]

Mr A. COTTON (Wolstanton and Burslem) said they seemed to be stranded between the people who wished to do too little and the people who wished to do too much. The saying of the Founder of Christianity, that "the poor ye have always with you," was not an economic constant, but a statement of fact, and it did not imply that they would always have the poor with them. Paupers might be roughly classified as follows: (1) Children; (2) the aged; (3) the afflicted; (4) the imbecile; and (5) the undeserving. In his opinion it was inhuman and unwise to thrust the four former classes into the Workhouse. The legislature should provide proper institutions for them. The undeserving ought to be rigorously treated. With regard to gambling, he thought that a great responsibility rested on the press of the country for publishing sporting news. If Mr Gibson's theory that the Guardians should implicitly accept the relieving officer's report was accepted, it would tend to make the Guardians secondary to that official, a most undesirable thing. (Hear, hear.)

Mr HIND (Chesterfield) said that as a pressman he could assure the last speaker that experience showed that it was financially impossible to keep betting news out of a paper. Newspapers could not exist unless they published such information. "The poor ye have always with ye"—not "shall" have. They could get rid of poverty if they went about it the right way. He would ask them to assist the friendly societies to get an old-age pension scheme carried out. He was chairman of the investigation committee of one of the largest friendly societies in the world, and they found this difficulty, that when a man had worked all his life he fell ill, and eventually got on the lowest scale of sick-pay, when there was hardly any escape from coming on the rates. If the State would give a recognition of thrift, even to the extent of only five shillings a week, it would be a great help to the friendly societies, and relieve them of a burden which was bringing many societies to insolvency. (Mr Pell: "And cost the country twenty-two millions of money.") Whatever the cost, to enable a Christian country to have its people die not cursing but blessing their country, it ought to be voted. They could vote millions of money to blow people to pieces. One great cause of poverty was the field or sick clubs which abounded in the Midlands. Men paid into their funds, but were deprived of benefit on changing their employment. He asked the Conference to try to make membership of such clubs lifelong at the option of the members. It would keep a good many men off the rates.

Mr W. JONES (Bristol) said that indiscriminate charity was productive of a deal of pauperism, and he reckoned church doles did a lot of harm to the recipients. He asked churchwardens present never to give anything simply as a dole, but solely when real help was needed.

Mrs GRAY (Wandsworth and Clapham) said she would like to know what Mr Gibson would do with the poor. Would it not be better they should be shot and done away with altogether? She

cordially agreed with Mr Fisher that it was the divorce of the land from the people that was the chief cause of pauperism. She felt very acutely the ills she had had to labour under in her married life. (Laughter.) They laughed, but if some of them had had to fight poverty in the way she had had to, they would not laugh, they would realise the dignity of labour. Mr Crooks had told her that there were 20,000 fewer children sent by magistrates to industrial and reformatory schools now than in 1870, and that was a triumph of education. Education alone would enable the poor to emancipate themselves, as the middle classes had done by trades unions. Money would be well spent in giving every child a sound technical training. Rack rents, bad food, and bad housing were the causes of pauperism. Intemperance was not so often the cause of poverty as poverty was the cause of intemperance.

Mrs E. T. BOUSFIELD (Bedford) said that very little had been done by the Poor Law to deal with vagrancy in an effective manner. There was the terrible test of seven hundredweights of stone to break for every tramp. Some were honest working men, others worthless. To those who had come from less laborious work it was a terrible strain, and it utterly wore them out. At Bedford they had a private scheme, whereby they were able to test their tramps, and at the same time help the deserving. They had established a small lodging-house, and by giving one hour's work at night and one hour's work in the morning (wood-chopping), a man could get bed and board equivalent to what he would have to pay a shilling for outside. In that way the men earned what they had, and whatever their characters they had a right to what they earned. The scheme was suggested by that of the Church Army. Intemperance was responsible for much pauperism, and if the £149,000,000 per annum now spent in the drink industry could be spread over the other industries, it would do much to decrease wretchedness and pauperism.

Mr DUNCAN MILLIGAN (Wandsworth and Clapham) said that the papers were so rich in suggestions that he had been inclined to say, "A plague on both your papers," but both seemed to have gone beyond or else not reached the subject, "the causes of pauperism." He was glad to hear the Chairman say that the strike had not resulted in an increase of pauperism. He could only infer that there had been money laid by for a rainy day. Mr Fisher showed that little knowledge which is a dangerous thing. He wished that the land question had been left out of the Conference, for if they had nothing but the land to rely upon, the people of this country would all have been the veriest paupers. Let them study the map of Essex, and see the vast acreage of derelict land. The attention of the Conference seemed to be riveted entirely on working men as possible paupers. He could assure them that every class was represented by that term of pauper. If they named a class he would find them a specimen. (A Voice: "No landlords.") There would be many landlords in the Union if they owned nothing but land in Essex. After many years'

service as a Guardian, he asserted that in every instance the causes of pauperism had been either thriftlessness, drink, or misfortune. There was not time to say what misfortunes. Medical relief was a cause of pauperism. It sapped a person's independence. In every town he knew of there were medical relief societies where persons could by a small subscription provide for medical attendance. Having once tasted medical relief, a person was open to take everything else of the kind. Where outdoor relief was after careful inquiries found to be necessary, it should be ample. He had no hope for the adult paupers; his hopes were in the children. Educate the children, and so do away with one of the chief causes of pauperism. (Hear, hear.)

Mr GIBSON, in reply, said he had certainly not stated that trades unionism was a cause of pauperism. He would not treat as criticism of the paper any of the personalities which had been indulged in by some of the speakers. He invited the careful perusal of his paper, and thanked the Conference for its kind reception of his views.

Mr FISHER said that wherever people had been temperate, the only persons who had benefited financially were the landlords—an instance being Toxteth, where rents had gone up 33 per cent. because there were no public-houses there. As a member of one of the oldest trades unions in the country, the stonemasons, he could only say that when a man got too old to earn the current rate of wages, he was enabled to make the best bargain he could with his employer. "But stonemasons don't get very old," he pathetically added. He hoped Mr Pell was not so narrow-minded as to wish to revert to the Dark Ages, and choose people's literature for them. He urged the general provision of allotments and small holdings, and concluded by remarking that the only thing that had been said of his paper was that it was utopian. His ideal might be a long while coming, but it would come. The thing to be desired was to keep the people on the land.

The CHAIRMAN, in proposing a vote of thanks to the authors of the papers, said that he hoped Mr Fisher was thinking rather of principles than persons in his strictures on landed proprietors. They had much to learn from Mr Fisher, but Mr Fisher would forgive him for saying that he too had something to learn before arriving at an accurate estimate of the land question. It was to be hoped that Mr Fisher would avail himself of opportunities which he (the speaker) was sure would be readily afforded him of studying the land question. (Hear, hear.)

Dr GOMER LEWIS proposed, and Mr CROOKS seconded, a vote of thanks to the Chairman, and this having been carried with acclamation, the Conference was adjourned.

WEDNESDAY, 2ND MARCH.

Mr VICTOR CAVENDISH, M.P., the Chairman, announced that Mr Chance, the Hon. Secretary of the Central Poor Law Conference, would read the paper which had been prepared by Miss Lonsdale.

INCREASED POWERS OF DETENTION OF CHILDREN.

By MISS SOPHIA LONSDALE,

Guardian of the Poor, Lichfield.

I HAVE been asked to write a short paper on certain proposals which have recently been made with regard to the amendment of the Poor Law Act of 1889. Some of these proposals are embodied in a Bill, introduced last year by Mr Ernest Flower, which has probably been seen and considered by every one here. I will take these and other proposals in order, and place before you the criticisms which have been made on them by those who have had the opportunity of studying the very important question of the control of Guardians over various classes of children.

Section 1 of the Poor Law Act of 1889, which is familiar to us all, gave Guardians the power, if they saw fit to do so, of adopting deserted children who were being maintained by the poor rate—a boy up to the age of sixteen, a girl up to the age of eighteen. The Guardians can at any time rescind the resolution to adopt any child. An appeal can also be made by the parent to a Court of summary jurisdiction, and this Court can set aside the resolution of the Guardians. Clause 4 of this section also provides that a child may be considered as deserted if its parent is imprisoned in respect of an offence committed against the child; while clause 5 enforces the liability of the parent to maintain the adopted child.

Mr Flower's Bill proposes to add to these deserted children two other classes of children maintained by

the rates who may be adopted by the Guardians, *i.e.*, (a) orphan children ; (b) children of parents who, by reason of character, mental deficiency, habits or modes of life, are in the opinion of Boards of Guardians unfitted to have control of them.

This Bill further proposes to amend the Act of 1889 by extending the age for the control of boys as well as of girls until they are eighteen, and provides that at the age of eighteen a boy or girl may consent in writing to continue in a state of adoption until they have reached the age of twenty-one ; and further provides that any person who assists or induces an adopted child to escape from the control of the Guardians, or conceals him when he has escaped, shall be liable on conviction to a penalty not exceeding £20.

The Bill proposes to alter sub-section 4 of section 1 of the Act of 1889 as follows : " Where a parent is imprisoned under a sentence of penal servitude or imprisonment with hard labour for a term exceeding six months, this section shall apply as if the child or children of that parent had been deserted by that parent."

The first criticism which I will notice is that there should be some definition as to what is meant by " deserted " and " orphan " children. They are clearly defined in the Boarding-out Orders of the Local Government Board, and it would be easy to add these definitions to any Bill.

Another criticism is that a proviso contained in the Act of 1889 has for some unaccountable reason slipped out of Mr Flower's Bill. I refer to the power given in that Act to Guardians, under clause 1 of section 1, of rescinding a resolution to adopt a child. Why is this ? It is surely a useful and necessary part of the Act, as the circumstances of a child may change at any time. It is conceivable, for instance, that a widow who has been careless and neglectful may marry again, turn over a new leaf, and the home become suitable for a

child. Why should the rates be burdened in such a case? A Bill which gives such very great powers to Guardians with one hand should certainly not take them away with the other.

Clause 3 of the Bill is copied from the Act of 1889, and runs thus: "For the purposes of this Act a child shall be deemed to be maintained by the Guardians if it is wholly or partly maintained by them in a Work-house, or in any district school, separate school, separate infirmary, sick asylum, hospital for infectious diseases, institution for the deaf, dumb, blind, or idiots, or any certified school under the Poor Law (Certified Schools) Act, 1862, or is boarded out by the Guardians, whether within or without the limits of the Union."

It is certainly a matter for consideration whether a child who simply enters an infectious hospital for a few weeks should be included in a new Bill at all, and it has been suggested that this clause should be amended thus: "Nothing in this Act shall apply to a child who has not been in a Poor Law institution for at least fifty-two weeks consecutive or otherwise." Such an amendment at this would be, one would think, a valuable safeguard.

Objection has been made to the clause which provides that the age of protection shall be raised to eighteen and twenty-one. It is thought by many Guardians that if boys and girls have maintained themselves respectably for two or three years with the help of the agencies at hand for their protection and encouragement, they may be expected to have learned enough of life to go on in the same course, and to have made friends who will help them to do so. "Would it not," writes one most experienced Guardian, "be somewhat demeaning to these young people to continue the legal protection of public authority so long after they had begun life for themselves?"

The Clerk to the Sleaford Board places his finger on a weak place in Mr Flower's Bill, and opens a very

large question. "The definition in the Bill," he says, "as to the word 'maintained' is not clear, but I certainly think that as it is at present defined it includes the children of vagrants, who may be only maintained one night in the Workhouse if the Guardians wish to exercise their powers under the Act."

Whether this definition is the one intended by the draughtsman of the Bill who can tell? There can, I think, be no reasonable doubt that the Clerk to the Sleaford Board is right in his view as to the legal meaning of the word.

I suppose there is no one here to-day who is not anxious, nay eager, to do something for those unfortunate beings, the children of the habitual tramp. I think it possible that the Guardians of a Union in which only one day's detention is the rule, hardly realise, as those are able to do in which two days' detention is enforced, the evils connected with those tramp children. Two days gives time and opportunity for seeing them and talking to them quietly. Many of them are strong, healthy creatures enough, well fed, and with leg muscles greatly developed by incessant walking. Of course there are feeble specimens, completely worn out by the cruel walk of the day before ; so exhausted are they, that in our Union we have sometimes insisted on keeping them an extra day or two to recover. On the whole, however, I cannot say that the tramp children I have seen are as a rule unhealthy. The evils are chiefly moral, for these poor things have no training, no education, except to follow literally in their fathers' and mothers' footsteps, and to become in their turn experienced gentlemen and ladies of the road.

But anxious as we must all be to see something attempted on behalf of these children, I cannot help thinking that we should leave them alone until the whole subject of vagrancy is dealt with, and I would deprecate any effort being made to deal with these children apart from their parents.

If the suggestion requiring a child to have been "in a Poor Law institution fifty-two weeks consecutive or otherwise" before adoption by the Guardians were added to the Bill, the tramp child would almost certainly be excluded.

Another criticism which has been made is that no mere tinkering of the Act of 1889, such as is provided by Mr Flower's Bill, is adequate. It has been suggested that what is really needed is a new and extended Act, which should take the place of section 1 of the Act of 1889, and that the section should be repealed. This new Act would not only deal with all those classes of children for whom powers of adoption are said to be required, but would extend the powers of Guardians in other directions also. It would, for instance, be well to amend the Act of 1851. Section 4 of that Act only requires a child to be visited up to the age of sixteen, or so long as it retains its first situation. It is difficult to find any good reason why this duty of visiting should cease when a child under the age of sixteen has changed its situation. Another useful power which might be given to Guardians would be that of removing children up to the age of sixteen from situations which have been found to be unsuitable or undesirable. At present, as we all know, the child only can legally give notice. I suppose we should all agree that these powers are much needed.

And now, having put before you all the criticisms of Mr Flower's Bill which have reached me from various quarters, I am going to ask for the indulgence of this Conference for a very few minutes longer while I venture to go back to first principles. I have struck the key-note of what I wish to urge upon you when I said that I should deprecate any action being taken with regard to the children of vagrants apart from their parents. I should equally deprecate (and I believe I am not alone in this) any action being taken with regard to the detention of any of the children for

whom Mr Flower desires to legislate, apart from those who are really responsible for them. I believe that legislation of this kind is beset with difficulties and dangers. I fancy that Mr Flower and those who agree with him have brought us face to face with the old question of alleviating symptoms rather than grappling with the disease. There can be no greater pleasure than to soothe painful symptoms, but it is neither a scientific, nor, in the long run, a satisfactory form of treatment. I cannot look on Mr Flower's Bill as either scientific or satisfactory, and I venture to ask two questions, which I hope will be answered by Guardians of far wider experience than a country Guardian like myself.

First, Is one of the classes for whom it is proposed to legislate, the ins-and-outs, comparatively speaking, very large? I have been told by Guardians who ought to know that it is not. Who wishes to deny, even if it were possible to do so, that the case of these children is disheartening, heart-breaking if you will, to Guardians who have spent infinite care and pains, as well as the ratepayers' money, on education and training, only to see boys and girls carried off whenever their worthless and vicious parents choose to leave the Workhouse. When we consider the fate of the child of the "in-and-out" pauper, what wonder that we lose patience, and that our meditations are apt to lack that calm and dispassionate quality which would send us back to sound principles as our guide and support?

Bad, however, as the case of these children is, I dread something worse, and that leads me to ask my second question. Is it wise, is it right, is it just to put a premium on neglect, bad habits, and evil modes of life? In other words, the provisions of Mr Flower's Bill may be only another form of preaching an already too well established doctrine to that very large class of persons who are just on the edge of the Poor Law :

“Only behave ill enough, neglect your plain duties sufficiently (you have as yet, it is true, hardly fulfilled our conditions, but go down one step further), be a little more drunken, a trifle more dissolute, a thought more immoral, and a grateful country, by means of a sympathetic Board of Guardians, will adopt your children, relieve you of your present responsibilities, and enable you to incur others when and how you please.” I am anxious—I know my anxiety is shared by others far better able to judge than I am—as to what might be the results of this extension of powers of detention and adoption to “ins-and-outs.”

There are two safeguards in Mr Flower's Bill as in the Act of 1889. The first is the power given to Guardians to make the parents repay the cost of maintenance. This is all very well in theory, but how about practice? If there is a thing which Guardians in London and other large towns have reason to know, it is the difficulty of enforcing such payments. In the first place, you have to catch your parents, who have probably taken particular pains to make this next to impossible; and in the second place, you have to satisfy the magistrates that these people are in a position to pay. I ask the Metropolitan Guardians here whether their experience of magistrates' decisions is so encouraging as to warrant them in hoping for much assistance from that quarter? Are we not justified in thinking that the Guardian who ventures to lean ever so lightly on the staff of that bruised reed, the Police Court, will find his hand pierced through and through? Very often the country justice has been or is a Guardian himself, and I suspect that our experience in the country Unions is far better in this respect than that of Guardians in London and the large towns. But the following instance, which has been kindly furnished by an experienced Metropolitan Guardian, will suffice, though it would be easy to add others did time allow me to do so.

A widower, closely connected with thieves and other bad characters, who had deserted his two children, appealed to the magistrate against the decision of the Guardians to enforce repayment. His Worship said that if the Guardians insisted on payment, he should order them to give up the children, although he was perfectly well informed as to the fate awaiting them if they were given up to their father. The protection in this case was only maintained by a friendly arrangement with the father, by which he agreed to leave his children undisturbed, and the Guardians promised not to press for payment.

I think most Guardians will agree that in nine cases out of ten the safeguard of repayment by parents will be a mere farce.

The other safeguard is that this Bill leaves this matter of adoption entirely to the discretion of the Guardians. Here I am going to venture on to what I know is delicate ground. I admit as fully as any one can do that there are Boards of Guardians to whom one would be prepared to give almost any powers. We know that there are Boards, and one would hope and believe that the number is increasing, who give cheerfully and without stint of their very best to the work. But we know also (it would be affectation to pretend not to know) that all Boards are not alike. The discretion of Boards is a varying quantity; acts of indiscretion, to use no harsher term, deprecated it may well be by a wiser minority, have been and are committed every week; acts due not so much to lack of the power of judging, as to hurry, to Guardians getting wearied, and really failing to give the necessary attention to the matter in hand. Mr Flower's Bill (necessarily based on the assumption that all Boards are equally discreet and equally discriminating) would give powers to Guardians which demand in the use the greatest possible wisdom and careful attention to detail. It will be said that Guardians already possess

many such powers. This is very true, but I am not alone in thinking that it is possible that for the present at any rate they possess enough.

The cry of the present day, re-echoed from many quarters, is, "Save the children, never mind anything else, only save the children." That is the cry, and there is so much of a true ring in it, so much of pathos, that one hardly dares to put the other side, the unpopular, the unpicturesque, side. But feeling strongly as I do the danger of all popular cries, I am bound to put this side before you. I do this partly because I know you will hear the arguments for the Bill stated fully and ably, and I can hardly expect you to agree with my views. It is getting more and more the habit to think lightly of old-fashioned objections, of dangers and difficulties, and to believe that Heaven is bound in some sort of way to "assist us to accomplish all our ends, and sanctify whatever means we use to gain them."

If indeed it were possible, as was recently suggested in the *Spectator*, to deprive the unworthy parent of his child and of his liberty at the same time, until he had learnt to respect both, I should most heartily agree to such a course. If any Guardian here can suggest a plan by which the children can be saved without running the very serious risks I have indicated, he will indeed be a benefactor. There surely must be a way out of the difficulty if some one could only hit on it. I am sure you will not expect me to do so. But until this *via media* is found, what can we do?

Take, for instance, the not uncommon case of parents who neglect to provide a decent home and shelter for their children. I have been told of a case in which a family came upon the rates, of whom the Relieving Officer reported that the father, mother, and two children (the eldest girl thirteen years old) had shared one dirty bed. The girl was protected (I imagine with the kind consent of the parents), trained, and has done

well in service. Excellent for the girl; there cannot be two opinions as to that. But supposing that in the first instance the sanitary authorities had been called in? Might they not have been able to make those parents, and the other parents in the street, realise their responsibilities? If the authorities were not called in (I do not know whether in this case they actually were or not), the action of the Guardians distinctly put a premium on bad habits and modes of life.

We may be told, we probably shall be told, that public opinion is not yet ripe for such a drastic measure as combining the imprisonment of the vicious, neglectful parent with the adoption of the child. We can at any rate try to educate public opinion by every possible means, and to use the powers we already possess wisely and well. It may be a long road, but I firmly believe it to be the only safe and right course, the only course, that will answer in the long run. We cannot, it is true, go in advance of public opinion. To specialists, as many of you here are, public opinion often seems a dull, slow scholar. None the less is it our duty to endeavour so to train it, that in time our fellow-countrymen may be induced to believe with us that "character is the end of human life, and the most merciful treatment we can mete out to men is that which tends to build up character."

To sum up what I have endeavoured so imperfectly to put before you. The chief points which seem to demand the consideration of the Conference are—

(1.) The definition of the words "maintained," "orphan," and "deserted."

(2.) The length of maintenance which should qualify a child for adoption.

(3.) How best to protect our children, without placing great temptation in the way of a very large and already much tempted class.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN intimated that Mr Chance, having read the paper, would open the discussion upon it. (Hear, hear.)

Mr CHANCE, who was warmly greeted, said that he wished to say a few words on this very interesting subject, especially upon the questions of the "ins-and-outs" and vagrant children. The case of the orphans had been proved, and if the Act of 1889 could be extended to include orphans, and to define the terms "deserted" and "orphan," it would carry them quite far enough for the present. There had been the most extraordinary statements as to the number of the "ins-and-outs." He himself believed that Miss Lonsdale was quite correct in stating that there were not many of them. He would read from an article by Mr Geoffrey Drage, M.P., who had taken a very great interest in Poor Law questions. In it he said that a rough idea of the number of ins-and-outs could be given by taking the number of children dependent on the rates as 238,489. About 18,000 were in the metropolis alone, of whom 14,000 were in the metropolitan schools, and the percentage of admissions and discharges in one year was about 63 per cent. On such a basis the "ins-and-outs" would number roughly 144,000. That was simply ridiculous. Every one knew it was nothing like that. (Hear, hear.) He (Mr Chance) had tried to get at an estimate of the number of the "ins-and-outs." In London the Kensington and Chelsea Boards had got a school at Hammersmith for all children over three years of age. The children were kept there about a fortnight, and after that, if they were not taken away, they were drafted to the school at Banstead, and kept there a fortnight in the probationary ward before being sent into the school itself. The superintendent of the school at Hammersmith had stated that the "ins-and-outs" were nearly 30 per cent. of the children who entered the school. If they considered the total number of *indoor* pauper children in the whole of England and Wales, it worked out to something like 15,000 "ins-and-outs" children, not more than that. Other exaggerated statements were about these children, and the effect they had on the schools. Miss Florence Davenport-Hill was a great authority on the question, and took a great interest in the children, but she was a little given to exaggeration. (No, no.) She said in her evidence that the "ins-and-outs" were like the buckets on a dredging machine. "They come in and out from all sorts of horrible places and scenes of vice, and mix with the children in the school, and are constantly turning their moral filth on them." There was not a London Guardian at that Conference who would not tell them that the "ins-and-outs" never got to Banstead at all, and therefore they could not contaminate the children. The condition of the vagrant children was the hardest of all. It was terrible to think of them being carried about the country. What was wanted was a thorough inquiry into the whole question of vagrancy, and he was very glad Miss Lonsdale

had taken up the question. Until such an inquiry had been held, it would be very dangerous to take the vagrant children from the vagrants. He thought that if the children were excluded from the Bill, it would lead to the inquiry being held. He hoped that Guardians would press their local members to worry the Local Government Board into granting an inquiry into the whole question of vagrancy. (Hear, hear.)

Mr A. F. VULLIAMY (Clerk to the Ipswich Board) said that the writer of the paper seemed to be full of the fear that any future legislation for the good of the children would weaken parental responsibility. That was the great bugbear which had always stood in the way of helping the children. For his part he thought that Boards of Guardians could well be trusted with the power which it was proposed to give them. He did not think that Guardians were likely to waste the ratepayers' money by taking children from their parents: it was more to be dreaded that they would not exercise to the full the powers entrusted to them. Did any one think that people were prevented from drunkenness or vice by considerations of parental responsibility? No. The only thing that appealed to negligent parents was liability to imprisonment. They should not let the fear of weakening parental responsibility stand in the way of helping the children. (Hear, hear.) There were about 15,000 of these children, they were told, and that number was quite large enough to suggest the importance of doing something for them. Think of the poor wizened child, old before its time, and having plucked to the full of the tree of evil. Let Guardians use all the powers that could be given them for helping the children. They were told that vagrants would be only too glad to get rid of their children. The Ipswich Guardians passed a resolution that they would detain all the children that came into the vagrant ward, but the Local Government Board would not sanction it; but from the time the resolution was passed until after the decision of the Local Government Board was announced, no children were brought into the tramp ward. The children were the means of livelihood to the parents—or rather persons—who took them about. The Bill required amendment as to the power to return the children to the parents if the latter showed that they had changed their mode of life. They were told that the “ins-and-outs” did not contaminate the other children in London Unions at any rate, because they were sent to a probationary school; but what about the children they mixed with there? It was one of the greatest difficulties they had to contend with in managing such schools. By all means give Guardians additional powers, sure that they will not abuse them, and that it will be for the advantage of the public. (Hear, hear.)

Mr W. BURDETT (Kings Norton) said that the paper was an exceedingly good one. He could not agree with the remarks which fell from Mr Chance. He did not think Mr Chance had had any experience of the Cottage Home system. At Kings Norton they had

an admirable Cottage Home, but with the present limited control it was impossible for Guardians to do all that they otherwise might do for the good of the children. To educate them and fit them for life the Guardians must have the entire control of the child. He hoped that that Conference would be the means of stimulating the Government to do something for the children.

Mr W. BURSFIELD (Kensington) said that having had a great deal to do with children, in various ways he welcomed the principle of the Bill, that Guardians should have the power to detain children in certain circumstances. The clauses relating to vagrants ought, in his opinion, to remain on the Bill. The Central Poor Law Conference Committee had, on the eve of the Conference, resolved by a majority to refrain from making any recommendation that the powers for detaining vagrant children should be struck out of the Bill, and that opinion would have considerable weight. (Hear, hear.) No doubt a strong feeling existed among Guardians in favour of a Government inquiry into vagrancy. (Hear, hear.) But he personally would be very sorry that the opportunity of treating vagrant children should be deferred until such an inquiry could be held. No one who had studied the question of these miserable children, who were dragged about from place to place, to the ruin of body and soul, could do otherwise than wish the Guardians should have the power to detain them. (Hear, hear.) Parental responsibility could not be brought home to tramps. The fact that the children so detained would become a local charge would be quite sufficient guarantee that the powers would not be applied to too large a number of children. He wished it were possible to make the parents feel in some way the neglect of the children. In London the powers of enforcing payment in respect of children were under the control of the Home Office, and he wished that they could stimulate the Home Office to a larger sense of its responsibility in the matter. (Hear, hear.) There were many cases in which the parents could and should be made to pay for the support of the children. But in the case of vagrant children there was no doubt that they should be made a county or a national charge. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs PANKHURST (Chorlton) said that public opinion was thoroughly ripe for something being done at once. Last September at Blackpool (see report of North-Western District Conference), a resolution on the subject was unanimously adopted after the reading of papers by Mrs Sale and herself. (Hear, hear.) It was time to consider the children without considering the parents at all. (Hear, hear.) It was no use to expect any improvement in these unfortunate children unless they removed them from the moral and physical filth of the slums and the tramp ward. She believed that a strong resolution of the Conference would have great weight with Parliament, and might result in the passing of a sweeping Act even in the present Session.

The CHAIRMAN said it was not permissible to pass any resolution at the Central Conference.

Miss CLIFFORD (Barton Regis) (who was warmly greeted) said she would like to say that the remark of Miss Davenport Hill which was quoted probably referred to the country Unions, where, as a rule, there were no probationary wards. It had been a little overlooked that the Bill did not confer any extra powers of detention. The children who would come under its operation were already maintained at the public expense; all that the measure would do would be to prevent the unjust and demoralising interference of worthless parents with children who would otherwise, perhaps, grow up a source of joy and strength to the nation. The Bill would also extend the powers of the Guardians over young girls who went from the Unions out to service. Miss Lonsdale was wise in urging that public opinion should be educated in these questions, and she would add that the magistrates also should be educated therein. The working classes of England were thoroughly against these worthless parents, and wished the children to have a chance. She did not think it had been recognised how very deterrent the provisions of the Bill would be. She hoped that the Conference noted what Mr Vulliamy said about what happened when the Ipswich Board desired to detain the children. Many of these people were not entirely destitute of natural affection, but they were wholly unfit to have charge of their children. The whole public opinion of their class condemned them if their children were taken away from them. Those who were deprived of their children in that way ought not to be allowed to know where the children were, and they ought not to be allowed to see them until they had proved that they were fit to come in contact with the children. (Hear, hear.) She did not think the proposed Act would diminish parental responsibility. It would tend exceedingly to increase it. (Cheers.)

Rev. BROOKE LAMBERT (Greenwich) said he wished in the strongest possible manner to support the principle which Miss Lonsdale had stated. He was one of those who wished an inquiry into the whole question before they granted powers to Guardians to adopt the children of vagrants. If Mr Bousfield's suggestion that the charge should be a county or a national one were adopted, it would probably lead to reckless extravagance. In their anxiety for the present generation of children they were entirely forgetting the demoralising effect their action would have upon further generations, in inducing people to think that they had only got to be bad enough and they could have their offspring maintained at the expense of the State. (Hear, hear.)

Miss LIDGETT (St Pancras) said she could not see how the sanitary authority could act effectually, if at all, in a case like that which Miss Lonsdale cited in her paper. It would be very difficult to stop communication between parents and children, as suggested by Miss Clifford. But she quite agreed that to be deprived

of their children was always a severe punishment, for it hurt not only the affection, but the sense of property which was invariably felt in their children.

Mr PRICE JONES (Cardiff) said that in that town the Guardians collected upwards of £4,000 from delinquent parents towards the maintenance of their children. (Several members: How much?) Upwards of £4,000 — but not exclusively from that source. (Members: Oh, oh!) With regard to young girls in service, he thankfully recognised the work of voluntary visiting by ladies, but at the same time he would like to see the Guardians appoint a head officer, a motherly sort of person, to visit and advise and sympathise with girls who were launched into the world from the Unions without any knowledge or experience of the trials and troubles of life.

Hon. Mrs CROPPER (Kendal) said the thought of the children outweighed every other consideration. They had already the power to rescue children who were subjected to gross cruelty. Now they sought power to deal with those children who lived under insanitary conditions, and had insufficient food, or whose parents were unfit to have charge of them. The Bill was vague on one or two points. "The information" of the Guardians was very vague, and so was "parental rights." Up to what age would the Guardians retain control over young people?

Mr HOLLAND (Leicester) said that Leicester being on the road from London to the great cities of the north of England, witnessed the worst evils of the tramp system, and he appealed for support in asking for extended powers in regard to "ins-and-outs."

Mr HARDING ROBERTS (Clerk to the Holywell Board) said he would just like to refer to the figures mentioned by Mr Chance, and to say that they were to him quite inexplicable. He would like to see greater powers entrusted to Guardians for dealing with the "ins-and-outs." More regard seemed to have been paid to the parents than to the beneficial effects to the children of the extended powers now suggested. As they had often been told in those Conferences, the hope of the future rested with the children; and he could not help thinking that anything they could do for the young must tend to diminish the pauperism of the future. (Hear, hear.) If Mr Flower's Bill were accepted there would be ample powers, and he was certain they would not be used harshly or extravagantly. It must not be forgotten that the resolution of the Guardians could at any time be rescinded in favour of parents who had shown a true desire to reform, and had restored confidence in their ability to bring up their children properly. (Hear, hear.)

Mr MILLIGAN (Wandsworth and Clapham) said that speaking not as a Guardian but as a manager of the North Surrey Schools, he implored the Conference to deal with this matter solely from the point of view of how to save the children. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. Canon DENTON (Ashby de la Zouche) said the valuable discussion which had taken place that day would have its effect in

all parts of England. He believed that the great remedy for pauperism was in doing all they could for the children. (Hear, hear.) At any rate let us save the children if we cannot save the parents.

In replying, through Mr Chance,

Miss LONSDALE said—I will very briefly reply to the criticisms which have been made. Mr Vulliamy's argument, I think, amounted to this: These "ins-and-outs" contaminate the other children, therefore let us get all we can into the Workhouse. With regard to the vagrancy question, if the introduction of the vagrant children into a Bill will bring the question of vagrancy to a head, by all means let them be introduced. Anything that would do that I should welcome. With regard to parents of vagrants, I agree that these people do not want to part with these children. They are no doubt a source of profit. My fear is that, if deprived of them, the parents, or, shall I say, the people who take them about, will provide themselves with other children. In reply to another remark, I should say that I do not expect fine moral feelings from vicious bad parents, but I fear saying to the poor, "Be a little worse than you are, and you will hear of something to your advantage," and the number of the neglected children be indefinitely increased. Miss Clifford says public opinion is against these bad parents now; how long (if legislation of the kind contemplated is carried out) will it remain so?

The CHAIRMAN said that there seemed to be absolute unanimity as to the object they had in view, though there was of course divergence of opinion as to how to attain it. They were deeply indebted to Miss Lonsdale for the paper. (Cheers.)

At the afternoon sitting papers were read by Miss CHAPMAN and Dr J. MILSON RHODES as follows:—

NURSING OF THE SICK POOR IN (RURAL) WORKHOUSES.

By Miss F. M. CHAPMAN,

Guardian of the Tisbury Union, and Hon. Secretary S.W. District Poor Law Conferences.

My object is to deal with the question of "Nursing in Workhouses" from the point of view of the smaller Workhouses in rural districts, which have no separate infirmaries, only sick wards, no regular nursing staff, and where the total number of inmates in the Workhouse is under one hundred. In the purely rural districts this class of Workhouse preponderates.

In three of the south-western counties, accord-

ing to the returns of the Local Government Board inspector on Lady Day 1897, the total number of inmates—

In Dorsetshire,	9	Workhouses	out of 12	under 100.
In Hants,	15	„	„	25 „
In Wilts,	10	„	„	15 „

The average number of inmates per Workhouse between sixty and ninety. The manifest needs for adequate nursing of the sick poor in the larger institutions, where the numbers are greater; the comparative facilities with which such needs *can* be carried out, owing partly to there being a more varied composition of Boards of Guardians; a more obvious necessity on economical as well as humane grounds to *effect cures* as well as relieve suffering; and a greater interest shown by the outside public at large, have perhaps been some of the causes of a very considerable and increasing progress to be made in the nursing of the sick during the last few years.

With the smaller Workhouses the difficulties have been or are much greater. The class of sick which come into them are of a more uniform type; the acute illness is hardly ever seen, such being relieved in the voluntary hospital if it exists, or in the home outside the Workhouse; only the incurables, the aged, the infirm drifting into our Workhouse sick wards—those who have come to *stay*, cases which no nursing can *cure*, no medicine will restore to health, and yet which should demand unceasing attention and watchful care on the part of those who *relieve* and those appointed to tend them.

That it is the duty of the Guardians to keep such inmates in such health as is possible, to see that they are not exposed to unnecessary suffering by the lack of attention, cannot be denied. With our sick wards no question of merit or demerit of character can enter our calculations. The present welfare of those who come into our sick wards depend mainly upon the views

we take of our duties, the principles and methods we adopt. Therefore we must ever remember that the power to *alleviate* lies alone with us.

We should deprecate luxury, but desire *adequacy* of relief.

It is becoming yearly more and more apparent to those Guardians who have to deal with this class of Workhouse, that the title "Workhouse" is a misnomer; they are not Workhouses, they are sick asylums, and as Guardians we should do well to recognise more fully this patent fact. Assuming that the question of the sick poor in our country Workhouses is one of interest to all engaged in Poor Law work, and one perhaps which has not been brought much before these Conferences, I have endeavoured to obtain facts and general information on the existing arrangements for the nursing of the sick from various Unions in one of these south-western counties.

First, I would have you bear in mind that the "able-bodied" inmate, man or woman, is fast becoming an extinct type in our rural Workhouses. We have every variety of the maimed, the halt, and the blind, the aged, the infirm, and feeble-minded. Able-bodied paupers may perhaps visit the Workhouse in ones and twos during a winter, but what is still known as the "able-bodied" ward is never filled or even partially filled with such a class of inmates, and each year sees their number decreasing.

Two points, therefore, are apparent.

1. That the number of inmates in this class of Workhouse must be made up of the inefficient and sick.
2. That the care of the sick is one of the most important questions we have to deal with. It may be said that the system of pauper nursing must now become an evil of the past, and that the New Nursing Order of the Local Government Board will eliminate the pauper nurse from the sick wards.

See Article 1, "Notwithstanding anything con-

tained in any of the orders above referred to, no pauper inmate of the Workhouse shall be employed to perform the duties of a nurse in the sick or lying-in wards of the Workhouse, or be otherwise employed in nursing any pauper in the Workhouse who requires nursing."

Clause 2, however, seems to permit of an elastic interpretation.

"2. No pauper inmate of the Workhouse shall be employed as an attendant in the sick or lying-in wards of the Workhouse, or upon any pauper in the Workhouse who requires nursing, unless such inmate shall be approved by the medical officer of the Workhouse for the purpose, and shall act under the immediate supervision of a paid officer of the Guardians."

The pauper can still remain to all intents and purposes the assistant nurse, and even "sole nurse by night," with the one difference that he or she must be *certificated* by the medical officer.

With reference to the service of the pauper inmate as nurse or attendant on the sick, I will here quote the words of Dr Downes in his memorandum, which, though written five years ago, will still bear effectively upon what must ever be a point of weakness in our administration of indoor relief:—

"There is a great and increasing difficulty in finding among the inmates in health persons of good character, sufficiently able of body and fit in mind, to act as nurses. To commit the care of sick to paupers is therefore frequently to entrust them to unsuitable persons, having little escape, without interest in their work, and practically irresponsible. Skill is obviously not to be expected of such persons, but, beyond the sum of suffering which lack of knowledge implies in such matters, experience of pauper nursing has unhappily not seldom exemplified the evils which indifference, cupidity, and want of forbearance entails."

No other words can expose so effectively the evils attendant on such a system.

And yet I maintain that though the evils are so manifest, there is still a large demand made upon the unpaid pauper attendant for nursing, with or without supervision, in the sick wards of our country Workhouses, and that a great amount of extraneous and unnecessary suffering is the result amongst our sick and aged inmates.

The following report on a Workhouse in this southwestern county, on the existing arrangements for the nursing and supervision of the sick, may perhaps bear out more fully the points I would wish to establish.

1. The absence of the able-bodied paupers.
2. The insufficiency of paid officials.
3. The undesirability of certifying a pauper as attendant on the sick.

UNION A, January 1898.—The paid officials in the house are three in number—master, matron, and assistant-matron-nurse combined.

As Paid Servants.—Two Workhouse girls acting as cooks, ages 15½ and 16.

Laundry.—An outside woman, paid, comes in twice a week to help in washing—*unpaid pauper* inmates assisting.

Children's Ward.—"Nurse" A—— charge of children, assisted by "classed" imbecile, dumb.

Men's Sick Ward.—G——, "certified" attendant, attends on sick by day, and has sole charge by night.

Women's Sick Ward.—Widow, aged 70, "certified" attendant, assisted by "classed" imbecile, also sole charge by night.

Total number of pauper inmates, January 1898, 69.

In the women's wards there is only one able-bodied woman, who has three illegitimate children in the Workhouse. She works in the laundry with two other women of "arrested development," and has paid assistance twice a week, as the washing for the whole house and officials is very heavy. She also, one night in the week, sleeps in the sick ward to relieve the "certified" attendant, and also sleeps in lying-in ward when any such case comes in, as there is no other inmate in any degree fit for this responsible work.

Women's Sick Wards, two upper and two lower. One upper ward case of fits, helpless, which requires unceasing attention; certified pauper attendant, aged 70, sleeps in this ward. Lower wards, five bedridden cases, including two paralysis, one acute chronic rheumatism, two old-age sickness. The remainder are—One old age, in

bed most days ; two bad heart complaint, very feeble, unable to do any work in the ward ; three old age, "eighty," up most days, very feeble.

The inmate B——, classed as imbecile, is *practically* the pauper attendant, assisting the assistant-matron-nurse in the day, and attending at night to the wants of bedridden cases in both wards (between which there runs a passage), a bedridden case in each ward being very troublesome at night.

The certified pauper attendant, aged 70, does what she can, but sleeps upstairs, and owing to her age and ill-health is unable to do much in the day, and in fact she dislikes the work generally of attending on the sick.

The night work is onerous at all times, and the inmates are practically left from eight at night till the following morning to the care of the inmate classed as "imbecile." She is also feeble in health.

The door communicating with the main corridor of the house is locked at night ; a bell communicates with the assistant-matron from the passage of the lower ward.

On the men's sick wards there are two upper night rooms ; one lower, and one day room. Owing to the inability of the majority of the inmates in this ward to go upstairs, they sleep in the lower rooms ; one bedridden case of blindness in the upper ward. The "certified" pauper attendant sleeps in upper ward. Below, the cases vary from paralysis, blindness, lameness, old-age sickness, &c. Their means of communication with the pauper attendant at night by thumping with a stick by the most able-bodied one amongst them.

Communication with the assistant-matron by bell in the lower passage.

The certified pauper attendant has constantly to be changed, partly because none can be trusted for any length of time to do the work, and partly because there is a great dislike to it, as the old men are troublesome and exacting.

The duties of the master and matron are very sufficiently taken up with the general supervision of the house and garden, *as there is no inmate who can do any work in the house and garden without incessant supervision.*

When there is a lying-in case the matron and doctor are in attendance ; there is no provision for night nursing of such cases, nor for the nursing of any serious illness in the house at all.

The inmates approved by the medical officer of the Workhouse are employed as attendants in the sick and lying-in wards, but manifestly cannot act at night under the immediate supervision of any paid officer of the house.

The assistant-matron-nurse's duties are to *attend* to the sick ; *nursing* of any case is obviously impossible ; she has to combine her sick ward duties with a great amount of general work as well.

The above may be taken as a very typical Workhouse, in all its arrangements, of this class.

From Workhouses of the same class in the same county the following information has been obtained on the existing arrangements for the nursing of the sick.

In this county there are twelve Unions which have sick wards in the Workhouse. The chief questions asked were—(1) If you employ trained nurses, and how many? (2) What arrangements are made for the supervision and nursing of the sick at night? (3) Have you any system of co-operation with District Nursing Associations for the relief of the outdoor sick poor?

UNION B.—1 and 2. Two nurses, one trained. Thirteen men and twenty-four women. If night nursing is required it is done by a pauper. We cannot do without pauper help at present. 3. No.

UNION C.—We have no infirmary; it is strictly a Workhouse, with two sick and one lying-in ward. Each sick ward has eleven beds, occupied by epileptics, imbecile, and infirm. We have one untrained nurse, and she is assisted by an inmate on either side.

Note. — The Guardians will not dispense with pauper help, as we have so very few inmates, and they have no system of outdoor nursing. There is a lady district nurse in connection with the church, and supported by voluntary contributions. She visits all in the parish.

UNION D.—Sick wards, but practically it is an infirmary; they are together in one part of the Union, with the nurse's room in the middle, and the lying-in ward just above. We have one proper nurse only, and pauper ward attendants in each ward. Average about ten patients. As a rule, nurse supervises cases at night. We have as yet had no occasion to exercise the late order of the Local Government Board. We employ pauper help in each ward. 3. No.

UNION E.—One Workhouse trained nurse for about

fifteen patients ; the same nurse at night, with pauper help when necessary. We have no provision for the sick poor at their own homes, and not sufficient for the Workhouse. No notice has been taken of the Local Government Board Nursing Order.

UNION F.—We have sick wards under the jurisdiction of Workhouse officials. One nurse untrained. No arrangements are made for night nursing in either severe or chronic cases. The nurse's bedroom is close to the sick wards ; a pauper is *supposed* to call her if she is wanted. Pauper inmates at present do part of the nursing. The Guardians make no arrangements for the nursing of outdoor paupers ; in exceptional cases a small sum of money is allowed to the applicants themselves to be spent in attendance. "I quite agree as to the night nursing being so inefficient." *A case must be serious indeed before a pauper dares to disturb a nurse at night.* In this Workhouse there is no hot water in the sick wards ; it has to be fetched across two open courts when required.

UNION G.—(This is given, as it is so small.) Though the sick wards are in a separate building, the Guardians contemplate improving the present accommodation for the sick by building on to the infirmary. The total number is meant to accommodate eight men and eight women, but we often overflow. Our number of men increases, our number of women decreases.

Note.—The nursing is done by a woman who has been trained to the work by our local doctor. The medical officer of the Union has a population of nearly 4,000 besides the Union. In cases of old people receiving outdoor relief and needing nursing, they are paid a weekly amount. We have no other system of district nursing.

UNION H.—We have a good nurse whose *principal* duty is the care of the sick. She has at present about seven bedridden cases who do not require con-

stant attention. Bells from each sick ward communicate to a pauper attendant (certified), who sleeps in each ward, and occasionally sits up at night. Should the necessity arise, a suitable person would be engaged at night.

UNION I.—Part of the infirmary is in connection with the Workhouse, and part separate. Have two nurses, one probationer. Thirty-six patients to each nurse. No paid night nurse. Engage a person from outside *when* required.

(It is obvious that a paid night nurse would be *always* required with such a number of sick, but apparently the need is not recognised in this Union.)

Of the remaining three Workhouses (out of twelve which have sick wards) one alone has *regular* paid assistance from a responsible person for the sick at night.

Of another it is stated that “the arrangements for the sick are very unsatisfactory,” but no details are given.

The third, where there are twenty to thirty in the sick wards, “all chronic cases,” which do not require much “nursing,” a trained nurse, with a second, when needed, wards-women are employed. Outside help is employed when necessary, but there are generally inmates glad to help, and who “*would be earning their own living by nursing when out,*” and are glad to earn extra privileges by it.

From these facts given it may perhaps be reasonably inferred in this particular county, where the majority of the Workhouses have sick wards in the House—

1. That there is practically no responsible supervision of the sick and infirm at night.

2. That the pauper inmate (certified), whose fitness to be certified at all is doubtful, as may be seen from detailed account of Workhouse A, is to all intents and purposes the nurse by night, *and without the super-*

vision required by the Local Government Board Nursing Order in ordinary cases of sickness, or even in serious illness, if the one nurse is unable to nurse day and night.

3. That provision for nursing (by trained nurses) in serious illness is apparently not made.

It might, therefore, be generally stated that in this class of Workhouse the "chronic" cases of sickness, which demand careful attention both by day and by night, cannot receive the proper attention they require where there is a limited staff of paid officials.

I consider this lack of proper supervision of the sick at night an evil which should engage our earnest consideration as Guardians. Mr Baldwyn Fleming, in his address to the Hampshire Guardians in 1897, points out the same weakness when he says, "In thirteen Unions the care of the patients during the night appeared to be left altogether in unskilled hands; although in some of these Unions there is said to be some unskilled supervision which would enable skilled assistance to be called, if, in the opinion of the unskilled watcher, it were needed." A remark made on Union E, "A case must be serious indeed before a pauper dares to disturb a nurse at night," would tend to show that though the emergency might arise, it would be seldom that the "pauper attendant" would call for the skilled assistance.

The whole question of the *relief of the indoor sick poor* in these smaller Workhouses does not, I think, receive a sufficiency of attention from us country Guardians which it deserves, nor is it a question which is made of any special moment at elections of Guardians by the ratepayers generally. *Out-relief* is apparently the only form of relief which evokes sympathy and interest on behalf of the majority of those who elect their representatives. Your administration of out-relief, as a rule, alone calls forth the praise or blame of the outside public. And yet it might be

maintained that for the *sick* poor indoor relief is the only relief which *can* be made adequate, and therefore a question of paramount importance to those who wish their poor to be properly relieved.

As Guardians we are too apt to leave the "House" and its administration to the few paid officials and the medical officer. The latter is often overworked, and has a very large outside district to deal with as well.

The officials of the House will seldom if ever care to complain of insufficiency of assistance.

On our visiting days to the Workhouse we see the wards clean and the inmates at their best, and we report in our visiting-book, the "House appeared clean, and the inmates happy and contented." Only by patient and thorough inquiry can we ascertain how our sick are attended to, and whether our relief for them in all its details is sufficient, and the nursing arrangements by night and by day all we should desire for their comfort.

The recommendations I would make to bring about a more desirable condition of things in our sick wards, must be more or less of a general character—the details which go to make the comfort or discomfort of our sick must be left to each Board to consider for their individual Union.

First, I would have a recognition on the part of Guardians and the outside public that the care of the sick and aged indoor poor is a question of primary importance, and that their needs should be met in a more liberal spirit.

Then I would recommend the elimination of the unpaid pauper attendant on the sick by night *entirely*, and if possible by day, even though the pauper may be certified by the medical officer. The appointment of a regular *paid* night nurse in every Union where there is only one nurse, however small the Union. The night nurse could be appointed as assistant to the matron, and when there were no cases requiring constant

attention by night, could assist in house work by day. And also that reports be specially drawn up by the Visiting Committee periodically* (and by unexpected visits) to the Board on the existing arrangements for the care of the sick and aged by day and night. (A written report, carefully drawn up, will always carry more weight than any verbal communication.)

In order to give a practical illustration of the possibility of arriving at such a practical condition of things, I have appended a report on the Whitchurch Workhouse in Hants (a Workhouse of the smaller class), where all that *can* be done for the relief of the inmates *is* done by the Guardians, and carried out with careful attention by the officials of the House.

I have also appended the "Comparative" Statement issued in the Half-yearly Statement Book of this Union, to show that though the expenditure in the House is increased, there is no appreciable increase in the number who come into the House by reason of these extra comforts. It might also be stated that the out-relief of this Union is administered with great discrimination, and a system of investigation and rule which prohibits laxness or lavish administration on the part of the Guardians and relieving officers, without which, no doubt, increased expenditure *in* the House could not be maintained.

The comfort of our sick and aged poor rests mainly with us Guardians, and I am certain we all have their welfare at heart, but it is for us to inquire into our systems of relief, and make *wise* use of a power which gives us the fullest means of relieving a great amount of suffering. It is our duty to see that no extraneous suffering is inflicted by any neglect on our part from the want of proper administration or of careful investigation into any abuses which may exist within our Workhouse walls.

* This was done in Union A in February, and the immediate result was the decision of the whole Board to appoint a regular paid night nurse.

THE WHITCHURCH UNION, HANTS,

JANUARY 1898.

The paid officials in the House are—Master, matron, day nurse, assistant to the matron (acts as night nurse in any case of illness or old-age sickness), porter, laundry woman, and female industrial trainer for children.

No “certified” paupers to attend on sick on *any* occasion; all nursing or attendance on the sick is done by paid assistance.

Sick Wards.—One women’s ward to accommodate eight; any overflow goes into lower ward. One lying-in ward.

Men’s Sick Wards.—One upper and one lower for the sick and infirm; eighteen beds.

Married Couples’ Rooms.—Bedroom and sitting-room combined for each couple, with separate entrance to garden. Each room has a stove and oven, so that any cooking the inmates in their wards may wish to do on their own account is provided for. The other wards, night and day rooms for the so-called able-bodied paupers and children.

For the sick, the requirements appear to be all that could be desired. They are never left by day or by night to the care of unpaid assistance. The day nurse comes on at 7 A.M. till 8 or so at night. Her time is so fully taken up with the care of the sick that she does not help in the house work. The night nurse is on duty from 9 P.M. till 7 A.M. Her duties are to attend to the wants of all the sick at night. She walks all the wards, *none* of which are locked at night; a jet of gas is left in each room, and she carries a lamp with her. If there is little sickness in the House, she is able to assist the matron in the morning. In outbreaks of influenza or serious illness professional nurses would be hired.

The attention to detail on the part of the Guardians and officials for the care of their indoor poor is remarkable. They may feel well repaid for their thought and care of their aged poor by the unusual look of *happiness* on the faces of those who live in their Workhouse.

The total number of inmates in January 1898 was 61. The master reports that seldom able-bodied paupers come in. Their number are made up of the sick, the aged, the children, and feeble-minded.

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT COMMENCING LADY DAY 1868.

20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37
Half-Year ending	No. of Indoor Paupers.	No. of Outdoor Paupers.	No. of Vagrants.	In Maintenance.	Out-Relief (including non-resident Poor).	Lunatics	Extra Medical Fees.	Vaccination.	Registration.	Total Common Charges.	Amount in the £ on Rateable Value.	Cost per Head on Population.	County Rate.	Average Cost per Head per Day in the Workhouse.		Average price per 4lb. Loaf.	Amount of Contribution Orders.
				£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£
Lady Day 1868	78	716	360	223 10 10 $\frac{1}{2}$	1,259 4 6 $\frac{1}{2}$	56 4 7	20 0 0	7 4 0	8 15 6	1,882 4 2 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 11	0 6 9 $\frac{1}{2}$	292 19 0	0 0 5	0 0 0 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 5 $\frac{1}{8}$	2,607
Ditto 1872	114	641	138	266 10 4	1,087 16 11	61 12 1	21 5 0	9 4 8	8 5 0	1,836 4 3 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 10 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 6 7 $\frac{1}{4}$	292 19 0	0 0 4 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 0 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 6	2,562
Ditto 1876	80	311	329	257 14 1 $\frac{1}{2}$	620 2 9	57 13 2	13 16 0	9 16 0	10 13 8	1,276 14 0	0 0 5 $\frac{3}{4}$	0 4 7 $\frac{1}{4}$	259 14 6	0 0 5 $\frac{1}{4}$	0 0 0 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 5 $\frac{1}{2}$	1,533
Ditto 1880	91	243	377	240 5 3	394 2 8 $\frac{1}{2}$	105 10 9	10 1 6	13 8 5	10 9 6	1,108 13 10 $\frac{3}{4}$	0 0 6	0 3 11 $\frac{1}{2}$	372 1 8	0 0 4 $\frac{3}{4}$	0 0 0 $\frac{3}{4}$	0 0 6 $\frac{1}{4}$	1,095
Ditto 1884	77	230	215	252 8 10	355 2 11 $\frac{1}{2}$	151 3 9 $\frac{1}{2}$	16 12 0	17 18 6	9 2 6	1,222 9 7 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 6	0 4 5 $\frac{3}{4}$	371 15 10	0 0 7 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 0 $\frac{1}{4}$	0 0 5	1,551
Ditto 1888	83	273	370	398 13 6 $\frac{1}{2}$	339 18 0	107 14 10	5 10 0	18 16 9	9 8 6	1,363 0 0 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 6 $\frac{1}{4}$	0 4 7	301 11 9	0 0 7	0 0 1	0 0 3 $\frac{1}{2}$	1,830
Ditto 1892	77	232	537	413 17 8	271 13 8 $\frac{1}{2}$	107 7 3	10 10 0	16 6 3	8 19 6	1,246 9 4	0 0 6 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 4 4 $\frac{3}{4}$	186 11 2	0 0 9	0 0 1	0 0 5	1,011
Ditto 1894	71	281	904	350 11 3 $\frac{1}{2}$	367 8 11	121 19 7	11 0 0	15 18 5	10 12 6	1,287 19 2 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 6 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 4 6 $\frac{1}{2}$	500 12 11 $\frac{3}{4}$	0 0 8 $\frac{3}{4}$	0 0 1	0 0 3 $\frac{1}{2}$	1,671
Ditto 1895	49	342	511	310 13 6 $\frac{3}{4}$	338 17 4	88 9 10	14 0 0	15 6 3	9 10 0	1,186 11 9 $\frac{3}{4}$	0 0 6 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 4 2 $\frac{1}{2}$	455 2 8 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 9	0 0 1 $\frac{1}{4}$	0 0 3 $\frac{1}{4}$	1,395
Ditto 1896	58	180	732	292 14 4 $\frac{1}{2}$	330 8 9 $\frac{1}{4}$	110 11 8 $\frac{1}{2}$	6 0 0	15 19 2	9 14 0	1,289 3 2 $\frac{3}{4}$	0 0 7 $\frac{1}{4}$	0 4 6 $\frac{1}{2}$	439 6 5 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 7 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 0 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 3 $\frac{3}{8}$	1,155
Ditto 1897	63	249	410	308 15 11 $\frac{1}{2}$	358 18 9 $\frac{1}{2}$	145 5 11	14 0 0	13 3 8	8 12 6	1,308 15 0 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 7 $\frac{1}{4}$	0 4 7 $\frac{1}{2}$	436 16 8	0 0 7 $\frac{3}{4}$	0 0 0 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 4 $\frac{1}{8}$	1,155

ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF TRAINED
NURSES IN WORKHOUSES.

BY JOHN MILSON RHODES, M.D.,

Chairman of the Chorlton Union.

GREAT as the progress of Poor Law administration has been in all departments, nowhere has it been more rapid than in the treatment of the sick poor in our hospitals.

The number of paupers occupying the wards for the sick in our Workhouses is enormous. From the very useful return moved for by the Honourable Member for North Bedford, Mr Gair Ashton, I find that of the indoor paupers no less than 39,264 are sick and bed-ridden, and 19,287 additional cases are classed as aged and infirm, a total of not very far off 60,000. Once grasp this fact, and remembering that the voluntary hospitals of England all told only contain 16,400 beds, the enormous importance of our so-called sick wards, which in other countries are termed State hospitals, is at once evident.

How can we best care for this multitude of impotent folk?

To hear a good many people talk, you would think the solution a very simple matter. The longer you have studied this question, and the deeper you have gone into it, the more difficult is it to find an entirely satisfactory solution for all sorts and conditions of sick wards. Employ trained nurses is not quite the panacea that some people think it, though there is no stronger advocate of trained nurses than myself. It is all very well for places like Chorlton, Birmingham, and Liverpool, with their enormous hospitals, where they count their patients by hundreds and their nurses by scores, to run their establishments on the lines of ordinary first-class hospitals; but such places are the exception and not the rule. There are at least thirty

counties in England and Wales where the total number in the whole of the Unions in the counties is less than that in one of the hospitals I have named.

There are places like Stratton with no sick and bedridden, and only two aged and infirm. Lunesdale goes two better, having neither sick, bedridden, aged, or infirm. Aygarth in Yorkshire has only one aged and infirm. There is one county in Wales where they have a total of twenty-three sick and eighteen aged and infirm, and for this number they have four separate Workhouses.

In my opinion it would be better in a large number of Unions to combine and provide properly equipped hospitals for the sick poor than to have insufficient provision for the sick, which must obtain so long as not more than a few sick cases are found in the small rural Workhouses. The railway and the indiarubber tyred ambulance—I take it for granted that every decent Union in England has an ambulance—have revolutionised the conditions under which our Workhouses were established, and there is no doubt that patients can be taken twenty miles to-day with less fatigue than they could five half a century ago. Unions have combined for imbeciles, for epileptics, and for vagrants; why should they not combine for the sick, and by so doing promote both efficiency and economy? Probably a great many will say, “What! take these cases miles away from their friends?” My answer to that is, that if you will look at the case-books of the hospitals of large towns you will find plenty of cases that come thirty, forty, and even sixty and a hundred miles for treatment. So for small Unions I strongly recommend as one means of making good provision for your sick poor, combination.

Mr Baldwyn Fleming, in that most valuable paper of his on “Workhouse Nursing,” read before the Hampshire Guardians’ Association, divided Workhouses into three classes :—

1. Those which are large enough to carry a permanent staff sufficient for all ordinary requirements.

2. Those which always require some skilled nursing, but in which one nurse, with competent responsible assistance, is sufficient to meet the normal conditions.

3. The few small Houses where at times there are no sick, and where a nurse is only needed when there are inmates who require nursing.

There is very little doubt that the Guardians who have hospitals coming under Class 1 have in many cases fewer difficulties to contend with than Class 2 or 3, though we Guardians have difficulties to contend with which are unknown to the managers of voluntary hospitals—*e.g.*, there is no use disguising the fact that you find in our sick wards very few of the so-called “interesting cases”; the majority of the cases are diseases of a chronic or senile description, and they do not furnish that variety, not to say excitement, that nurses prefer. I mention this because it is one of the facts that tells heavily against us in our choice of nurses, especially in the smaller Workhouse infirmaries. Another difficulty is the fact that, while voluntary hospitals are usually in the towns where there is plenty of life, the Workhouses are usually placed out of the town where land is cheap, and are still in many cases surrounded by a wall, that makes them look more like gaols than hospitals—a survival of the time when all poverty was a crime.

Housing.—Handicapped with these difficulties, it is at once evident that if we are to attract the class of nurses that we must have—if our wards are to be as we want them—we must at least provide satisfactory accommodation for the nurses; that is, remember, satisfactory *to the nurses*, not only to the Guardians. I am afraid that in some of the Unions the provision is very far from being of this character. If your nurses are not made comfortable, they leave as soon as they have a chance, and the demand for good nurses being

very brisk at the present time, it is not long before Boards who do not make their nurses comfortable have to go through the trouble of selecting another official.

In my opinion those Boards who do not make first-class provision for both patients and nurses are anything but economical. There are Boards that have changed their nurses frequently in a year. From inquiries made, it appears that when the cost of advertising and travelling expenses for candidates is paid, the sum expended is about £5 for each nurse engaged—a sum that wisely expended would in many cases have avoided the necessity for advertising.

Of course every good Workhouse provides a separate bedroom for each nurse and a separate sitting-room for them, and no nurse's sitting-room is decently furnished without low arm-chairs, because nursing is hard work, and when the nurses come off duty they have a right to rest and comfort.

Holidays.—When I speak of proper provision, I use the term in a much wider sense than the mere apartments. Proper provision means that your nurses have the chance of fresh air and change of scene every day. Nurses must have fresh air if they are to be kept in good health. Remember that in every hospital there are many cases that are repulsive—there are the dirty cases where the draw sheets have to be changed again and again; there are the old women, whose name is legion, with horrible ulcers on their legs that have to be dressed every day at least; there are the dreadful cases of cancer, and we all know how unpleasant some of these are from the repulsive odour associated with them—realise what all these things mean to the nurse, and you will understand that two hours every day outside the walls of the institution is a by no means excessive quantity. In addition to this, they ought to have half a day a week, a whole day a month, and three weeks' holiday a year.

Diet.—There is one very common opinion among us, I am afraid, that our officials are very fond of grumbling about the diet. It appears to me, after very carefully considering the matter over, that there is a very great probability that if we were placed upon the same diet we should be equally discontented. This dietary question is a very important one, whether you look at it in its mental or physical aspect. If any one doubts that there is a mental side to the question, just consider what effect the announcement that there is nothing but cold mutton for dinner has on your temper, and you will very soon find that nothing disturbs your equanimity of mind more than a bad diet. Now equanimity of temper is absolutely essential if your nurses are to do their duty by their patients. We have lately heard a good deal about Workhouse dietaries, and as the Scotch would say, “muckle need on’t,” for they want reforming in a good many ways, and legally the consent of the Local Government Board is required for the reform of Workhouse diet tables; but this is not the case with the dietary of your officials if it is not what it ought to be; you and not the Local Government Board are responsible. I have no hesitation in saying, considering the work of the nurse, that there are scores, probably hundreds, of places where the diet is not adequate. There is nothing of the *dolce far niente* about sick nursing—it is downright hard work; and in many cases the work is continuous from going on to coming off duty. For these reasons the diet should be good, both as regards quantity and quality, and I advocate a good dietary on the ground of economy. I remember a case where the health of the nurses improved with an alteration in the dietary. I have added to this paper our nurses’ dietary at the Chorlton Union, as it is one that has had several years’ trial, and has come out of it satisfactorily; though if drawing it up again, I should rather increase the quantity of the jam 50 per cent., for if account is taken

of what is required for pastry, there is not very much left for tea, and it was to help the nurses to relish their food at tea-time that jam was given.

You will notice on referring to the table, that on one day of the week the dinner is *not* to be beef or mutton. The object of that regulation is to prevent the monotony so common in Workhouse officers' dietaries of beef and mutton, varied only by mutton and beef. On the one day they have fish, fowl, rabbit, pork, or veal, as the case may be. A varied diet is a little more work for the master, so far as dealing with the stores goes, but there is no doubt that Workhouse masters in having this extra trouble to make their officials comfortable, would find that they had less trouble in other directions, and get much gain by the efficiency of the institution.

There is another point that requires the consideration of the Guardians, both as regards the officials and the paupers, and that is the manner in which the food is cooked.

It makes all the difference as to the amount of nourishment furnished by the food if it is well or badly cooked, and also how it is served.

In a large number of dietaries the quantity and variety of vegetable food leaves much to be desired—potatoes, potatoes, and nothing but potatoes. Why should they not have a variety like ordinary people? It is to be hoped that the Departmental Committee on Dietaries, which is now sitting at the Local Government Board, will give us some help in the matter of dietaries for all classes. There is no doubt that at the present time some one is wanted to do for our Workhouses what Soyer did for the British army in the days of the Crimea; and if the ladies will really turn their attention to this question, and find an adequate solution of it, they will have proved themselves to be not only ornamental but useful also. Might I also suggest that as there are now training schools for

ships' cooks, it would be as well if there were also training schools for Workhouse cooks?

The appliances for cooking the food are in many Workhouses miserably inadequate, and I am sorry to say that the cooking apparatus in our large institutions in England is very inferior to that often found in institutions where the cooking apparatus is made in Germany.

Appliances.—It is not only in the kitchen that you require good appliances if the work of your institution is to be well done, and in this department I am afraid that many of our institutions are not up to the mark. Only a very few years ago I saw a sick ward with the hot-water pipes placed about a foot off the roof. Personally I have not much faith in hot-water heating appliances for sick wards, and much prefer the new-fashioned open fire-places. At the Chorlton Union we found that we got more heat from three of the complete combustion grates than we did from four of the old-fashioned ones, though the former burnt 30 per cent. less coal grate for grate.

There is another appliance that ought to be in every sick ward, viz., the bed crane. A very large number of Boards are building new infirmaries, and it costs very little to place iron brackets in the walls upon which rest iron tubes to fasten the bed pulls to. These pulls are a very great help to the old feeble folk, and also save the nurses many a sprained back, caused by lifting heavy cases, a very common form of trouble with nurses, and the results of which too often cause permanent injury. There is no need to talk to this Conference about the necessity for arm-chairs, bed-rests, water-beds, and wheel-chairs, for every little Workhouse with the slightest claim to efficiency is provided with such everyday articles.

There are two articles that ought to be freely used in the sick wards of all Workhouses, especially the new Workhouses where they have pitch-pine floor

boards—I mean, bees' wax and turpentine. It is absolutely necessary to have your floors thoroughly clean, but the plain boards with the constant washing they receive become little better than so many sponges soaked with water. Certainly for sick wards polish your floors, and if the boards are old and will not polish, cover them with linoleum, cemented down so that it is impossible for any dirt to get beneath it.

There are two necessary appliances in sick wards I have omitted to mention.

No. 1 is the necessity for good spring mattresses. These are now so cheap that they cost no more than the old style, and they certainly tend to greatly reduce the number of the nurses' horror—sore backs.

No. 2 is the W.C.'s. The pedestal W.C. is no doubt the right system, but I quite agree with Mr Gordon Smith that the seat, instead of being only a rim, should extend across two feet, so that old people may be able to assist themselves with their hands to rise. It may appear to be a trifling thing, but it is not to very feeble people, and to those suffering from lumbago, or any of the diseases of the spine.

Night Nursing.—Whenever I see in the Poor Law papers the advertisement, Wanted a night nurse, I always feel inclined to exclaim, "Lighten their darkness, good Lord, we beseech Thee," for there is no doubt that continuous night duty is not conducive to the health of the nurses. One month in three is certainly the maximum that you have a right to expect from any night nurse, and your staff should be adequate to meet the requirements of the institution on that basis. The rooms of nurses on night-duty should be situated where there is not the continual coming and going that you find in the body of the house. I have frequently known nurses complain bitterly of this loss of quiet; and having some time ago slept, or rather tried to sleep, under a service kitchen in one of the large hotels, I can understand what an infliction the constant noise must

be. If you can do nothing else, you may at any rate put down linoleum or cocoa matting on the corridor, so as to lessen the nuisance.}

There is another well-known difficulty in regard to night nursing in Workhouses, especially in the smaller ones, and that is the difficulty of providing proper meals for them. My opinion is that the best plan is to give them a good warm dinner or supper—you can call it which you like—before they go on duty, and a good breakfast when they go to bed, and the midnight meal they may be left to look after if there is, as there always ought to be in every Workhouse, a ward kitchen, where beef-tea, Benger's food, and other necessities can be prepared.

Night nursing is a very important question. Very often good night nursing means life or death to the patient, and therefore you ought to have a staff of nurses competent to the duties they have to perform day and night. At the same time there is no need for so large a number of nurses, because, as you know, the dressing of cases, washing and bathing, feeding, is principally done in the day, but the wards ought to be gone round frequently at night where there are acute or serious cases.

Number of Nurses.—Again and again the question has been asked how many patients ought you to allow to each nurse, as if the number was as unalterable as that two and two make four. A moment's consideration will enable you to see that the number required depends upon the class of cases. In large hospitals like West Derby, one to ten is certainly not too many; but where you have the usual large percentage of chronic cases, three to forty-five is certainly not too many—that is, one for night and two for day.

Salary of Nurses.—We often hear of Boards of Guardians who have a good deal of difficulty in getting good nurses. There is nothing wonderful in that. The wonder would be if they did, considering the wages

they offer. In the *Nursing Record* of the 29th January there are several advertisements for nurses at £20 per annum ; and for assistant nurses, who must have had at least one year's training in a hospital, and be between twenty-two and thirty years of age, £17 per annum, with a rise of £1 per annum until £20 is reached, is the generous offer of a Metropolitan Board. That means that after three years in a hospital with 500 beds she will receive £19 per annum, or just a small fraction over the enormous sum of 1s. per day.

Is it any wonder that you fail to attract good nurses when such salaries are offered, even after the completion of three years' training? There is nothing more certain than the fact that if you really want your sick paupers to be well nursed, if you want their recovery to be as quick as possible, if you want to avoid *the causes* of scandals (infinitely more important than the scandals), if you want to attain these objects, then do your duty by your nurses, and take care they do their duty by their patients.

It may be said that there is very little about Workhouse nursing. The hundreds of letters and questions I have answered on this question have convinced me that, given a good Board of Guardians, a good hospital matron or superintendent nurse, and a good staff of nurses, you may cherish a good hope that the treatment the patients receive in your hospital will tend to make them better and more useful members of society, will, let us hope, teach them something of the absolute necessity of light and air and cleanliness to health, and so, perhaps, remove some of those insanitary causes to which we owe so many of the occupants of our sick wards.

CHORLTON UNION HOSPITAL. NURSES' DIETARY.

	Daily.	Weekly.
Bread	1 lb.	—
Flour	—	1 lb
Meat	$\frac{3}{4}$ lb.	—
Bacon	—	1 lb.
Butter	—	$\frac{3}{4}$ „
Tea	—	2 oz.
Cheese	—	$\frac{3}{4}$ lb.
Coffee	—	3 oz.
Milk	1 pint	—
Sugar (raw)	—	8 oz.
Do. (lump)	—	12 „
Raisins	—	2 „
Currants	—	2 „
Eggs	—	4
Preserves	—	8 oz.
Sago, Rice, Tapioca, Arrow- root or Macaroni	—	2 „
Beer, Porter, or Milk*	1 pint	—

* Money is allowed per annum in lieu of either Beer or Porter.
Fish, Fowl, or Rabbit allowed once a week in lieu of Meat.

DISCUSSION.

Mr MACCALLUM (Uxbridge) said that some months ago he visited several Unions, and he made a point of inquiring about the nursing arrangements. He found plenty of trained nurses but no certificated nurses, and he found that Workhouse masters were opposed to the latter on the score of their independence. They were inclined to look upon nurses as a sort of maid-of-all-work and religious missionary rolled into one. Guardians also expected an excessive amount of work from trained nurses. He visited the Whitchurch Union in Hampshire and found that the master and matron carried out their duties in a most excellent way with the means at their disposal. He was strongly in favour of making their infirmaries as efficient and pleasant as possible for the sick poor. The papers were thoroughly practical.

Mr GEORGE ROOKE (Manchester) expressed the hope that the next Central Conference would be held in his city. ("Question.") He wished to pay a tribute to the memory of William Rathbone, the Lancashire man who first introduced trained nurses into Workhouse Infirmaries.

Dr DOMVILLE (Exeter) said the sick required nursing just as much by night as by day. He had been interested in nursing for fully twenty-five years, and he had had the satisfaction of seeing great

improvements made in this respect at Exeter. Nurses required a good dietary, proper recreation, proper comforts, and freedom from the tyranny of master and matron. The master and matron required support in the discipline of the House, and he knew that they were very unwilling that nurses should have the right to go out without applying to them for permission.

Rev. J. H. HIGLEY (Stepney) said it was a serious grievance that they should have to maintain an excessive nursing staff for lunatic patients, of whom there were seldom more than one or two in the House. He suggested that the County Council should establish a central lunatic receiving ward for all the parishes in London.

Mrs J. PASTON BROWN (Kingston-on-Thames) said they had frequent difficulties about nurses until they raised the salary from £20 to £27 a year, for which they could get a good certified nurse who would be content to remain a long while. They had a proper sitting-room and a piano. The principal difficulty was as to leave of absence. Nurses did not like to have to ask the master and matron for permission to go out.

Mr J. G. TAILLY (Buckingham) hoped that the Unions mentioned by Miss Chapman were not typical of the Unions throughout the country. He admired Dr Rhodes, and said his paper was worthy of him.

Mr FISHER (Gateshead) said that his Board had lately carried out the whole of Dr Rhodes' recommendations. (Hear, hear.) Their nurses had plenty of time off, and the charing work in the wards was done by women who otherwise would be paupers in the Workhouse. Their uniform rate of pay for nurses was £28 a year, not an extravagant wage when they considered the expense of training and equipping a woman as a certified nurse.

Mr LEACH (Rochdale) suggested that, upon appointment, the officers should receive a statement of their duties as defined in the Consolidated Orders of 1847, and he was sure that in that way a great deal of friction between the nurses and master and matron would be avoided. In his Union the nurses had alternately six weeks' duty in the infirmary and six weeks' duty out-door amongst the sick chargeable poor.

Mr TAYLOR (Eton) ridiculed the idea of nurses having pianos, and he also contended that nursing was a "trade" and not a "profession," and that pauper "nurses" were quite good enough for small Unions. The secret of efficiency in nursing was "surprise visits." (Laughter.)

Rev. W. H. H. FAIRCLOUGH (Burton-on-Trent) said he thought there was general agreement that their State hospitals should be second to none in efficiency. (Hear, hear.) Nothing had been said about isolation wards, and he therefore mentioned them as being very desirable for acute or offensive illnesses. Nurses should have the best possible accommodation, and their quarters should be at a distance from their work.

Mr MILLIGAN (Wandsworth) urged that certain classes of patients should not remain in the infirmaries ~~at all~~, but should be removed to pleasant places in the country, where they would not feel their position so much.

Miss BROOKE HERFORD (Hampstead) maintained that friction was not always attributable to faults of the master or matron, who were as a class quite the social and professional equals of nurses. It was too often owing to the want of tact and consideration on the part of the nurses. (Hear, hear.)

Mr J. W. TILLSTON (Halifax) expressed his surprise that Dr Rhodes recommended German cooking apparatus and other manufactures.

In replying,

Dr RHODES said Miss Chapman, whose paper was so good that nobody had ventured to criticise it, had asked him to reply for her. He did not think that any praise could be too high for the work done by Dr Downes, of the Local Government Board, in improving nursing in Workhouses. (Hear, hear.) Isolation wards should always be provided. He would recommend the best apparatus whether it came from Germany or anywhere else, and if he could he would improve upon it. He was glad to say that in the near future a colony of epileptics would be established by the Manchester and Chorlton Boards. In conclusion, he moved a hearty vote of thanks to Mr Victor Cavendish for his conduct in the chair.

Mr G. E. LLOYD BAKER had great pleasure in seconding the vote of thanks, which was carried with acclamation.

The PRESIDENT briefly replied, and the proceedings terminated.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT CONFERENCES HELD IN THE YEAR 1897-98.

CHILDREN, METROPOLITAN PAUPER.—*Re* the proposed formation of a "London Children's Asylums District" for dealing with special classes of pauper children.

I. (1.) "That, in the opinion of this Conference, it is desirable that separate provision such as is indicated in the Draft Order should be made for certain classes of children."

(2.) "That it be urged upon the Local Government Board, before constituting a new Board, to consider whether the duties created by the proposed Order may not with advantage be conferred upon existing authorities."

—*Special Metropolitan Conference*, February 1897.

CHILDREN, VAGRANT.

II. "That, in the opinion of this Conference, the time has arrived when some stringent measures should be adopted, authorising the Guardians to take the control and future education of the children passing through the tramp wards of the Workhouses, the expenditure in connection therewith to be borne and paid from the National Exchequer (if and so far as it cannot be collected from the parents), and that the Local Government Board be requested to take the steps necessary to attain this object."

—*North Wales Conference*.

DETENTION, INCREASED POWERS OF.

I. (1.) "That the power of the Guardians to pass a resolution under the Act of 1889 shall be extended to the children of habitual criminals."

(2.) "That if, in the opinion of two medical men, a woman is of feeble will power, and has entered the Workhouse with syphilitic disease, or has had more than one illegitimate child, a Justice of the Peace shall have power to order her detention for a period not exceeding three months; and such order shall be renewable on the like evidence if the circumstances remain unchanged."

(3.) "That where inmates not suffering from infectious disease wish to discharge themselves before recovery, the Guardians shall have power on the certificate of their medical officer, duly entered in his report book, to detain such persons for further treatment for a period not exceeding one month."

(4.) "That power should be given to a justice to commit habitual paupers and habitual drunkards to farm colonies."

—*Northern Conference*.

II. "That the Conference desires to press upon the Local Government Board the urgent importance of the subject dealt with by the Bill introduced in the last session of Parliament, under the title 'A Bill to extend and amend the provisions of the Poor Law Act, 1859'; and at the same time, to press upon the Guardians of Lancashire and Cheshire the desirability of their considering how far, by combined action on the part of neighbouring Unions, accommodation specially adapted for feeble-minded children and of sane epileptics may be secured."

—*North-Western Conference.*

EXPENSES OF GUARDIANS AT CENTRAL CONFERENCES.

I. "That in the opinion of the Conference it was very desirable that the order of the Local Government Board restricting the number of Guardians at the Central Conference should be amended, and that not less than two Guardians and the Clerk should be allowed to represent each Board, irrespective of distance, at the Central Conference, and that each Union be requested to send to the Local Government Board a resolution to this effect."

—*West Midland Conference.*

II. "That this Conference recommend that every Board of Guardians, irrespective of distance, should be empowered, if they think fit, to send two Guardians and the Clerk to the Central Conference at the expense of the rates."—*Northern Conference.*

LOCAL TAXATION.

"That the present system by which one and the same property is, or may be, assessed for tax and rating purposes by four different authorities, viz., for Property Tax, County Rate, Union (including Poor, Sanitary, District, School Board, &c.), and for Land Tax, is an anomaly. This Conference desires, therefore, to urge upon the President of the Local Government Board the pressing necessity for the immediate passing of a Bill which will have the effect of simplifying matters, by enacting that there shall be one assessment for all tax and rating purposes, such an assessment to be made on one basis common to the whole of England, and that the Government be urged to pass as soon as possible a measure which will have the effect of securing that all kinds of property, real and personal, shall in future contribute equitably to Local as well as Imperial Taxation."

—*Eastern Conference.*

LUNATICS, &c., CLASSIFICATION OF.

"That it is desirable in the interests both of the imbecile inmates of the Workhouses and also of the ratepayers, that imbecile asylums should be established in suitable centres, and that the 4s. grant should be allowed for asylums for congenital idiots."

—*Northern Conference.*

OVERSEERS.

"That, in the opinion of this Conference, the office of Overseer as it at present exists, should be no longer allowed to continue, and that a permanent official or officials should be appointed whose main duties would be to superintend the collection of rates, and to assist the Assessment Committee in the valuation of property." —*South Wales Conference.*

VAGRANCY.

(1.) "That it shall be an offence for persons without visible means of subsistence to wander from place to place—giving them the benefit of the First Offenders Act to operate as a judicial caution—unless such persons have a 'way permit' from some reliable properly constituted authority."

(2.) "That it shall be an offence to cause children to wander, as aforesaid, under any circumstances whatever."

(3.) "That the periods of detention named in the fourth section of the Pauper Inmates Discharge and Regulation Act, 1871, shall be doubled." —*Northern Conference.*

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING CHOICE OF SUBJECTS FOR DISCUSSION AT DISTRICT POOR LAW CONFERENCES DURING THE YEAR 1898-99.

1. Emigration of Pauper Children.
2. Pauperism in connection with Discharged Soldiers.
3. Workhouse Rations, Dietaries, and Cooking.
4. Increased Powers to Sanitary Authorities for dealing with Insanitary Dwellings (including Overcrowding).
5. Treatment of Pauper Epileptics.
6. Combination among Unions for the Treatment of (a) Pauper Imbeciles, and (b) Pauper Epileptics.
7. Is it desirable that the "Way Ticket" System of dealing with vagrants, as carried out in Gloucestershire and other counties, should be extended to the whole country?
8. Outdoor Relief.
9. Boarding-out *within* Unions and Ladies' Committees.
10. Does the Boarding-out of Pauper Children tend to reduce Pauperism?



Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences.



This Committee consists of three representatives annually elected by each of the District Poor Law Conferences in England and Wales, and of certain additional members co-opted by the elected members, but not to exceed in number more than one-third of the number of elected representatives.

The co-opted members are appointed for two years, one-half of them to retire by rotation in each year, but to be eligible for re-election.

The following are the Committee and its Officers:—

Chairman—ALBERT PELL, Esq., LL.D., Haselbeach, Northampton.

Hon. Treasurer—W. BOUSFIELD, Esq., 20 Hyde Park Gate, S.W.

Hon. Secretary—W. CHANCE, Esq., Guildford, Surrey.

Assistant Secretary—J. J. GOVER, Esq., 47 Essex Street, Strand, W.C.

ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES.

1. Metropolitan and (2.) South-Eastern Districts—

FEW, Rev. C. E., Sevenoaks, Kent.

MILLIGAN, D., Esq., New Wandsworth.

WILLINK, H. G., Esq., Hillfields, Reading.

3. South Midland District—

ASHURST, W. H., Esq., Waterstock, Oxford.

PELL, ALBERT, Esq., LL.D., Haselbeach, Northampton.

SPERLING, ARTHUR, Esq., Lattenbury Hall, St Ives.

4. Eastern District—

MONTGOMERIE, C. T. M., Esq., Gissing Hall, Diss.

STEWART, Rev. C. J., The Cedars, Anglesea Road, Ipswich.

WICKS, Alderman J., Colchester.

5. South-Western District—

CLUTTERBUCK, E. H., Esq., Hardenhuish Park, Chippenham.

DOMVILLE, E. J., Esq., Exeter.

KING, AUSTIN J., Esq., 13 Queen Square, Bath.

6. West Midland District—

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KNIGHT, C. A. R. BOUGHTON, Esq., Overton, Ludlow.

LLOYD-BAKER, G. E., Esq., Hardwicke Court, Gloucester.

7. North Midland District—

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ELLISON, Rev. C. C., Bracebridge, Lincoln.

MORRIS, Rev. E., Blackwell Vicarage, Alfreton.

8. North-Western District—

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HIGNETT, Rev. Canon H. A., Ringway, Altrincham.

RHODES, Dr J. MILSON, Ivy Lodge, Didsbury.

9. Yorkshire District—

ASPINALL, Rev. G. F., Hall Ings, Southowram, Halifax.

BROWN, J., Esq., Ashleigh House, Dewsbury.

GUY, T. A., Esq., 8 Carlton Place, Bradford

10. Northern District—

BEATTIE, JOHN, Esq., 5 Summerhill Grove, Newcastle.
CRAIGHILL, GEORGE, Esq., Guardians' Offices, Gateshead.
CROPPER, Hon. Mrs, Tolson Hall, Kendal.

11. South Wales District—

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HERBERT, H., Esq., Bryn Marles, Ammanford, Carmarthenshire.
LLOYD, Rev. RHYS JONES, Throedyrwyr, Newcastle-in-Emlyn.

12. North Wales District—

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ROBERTS, P. HARDING, Esq., The Grove, Holywell.
THOMAS, HUGH, Esq., Froneirion, Llandegfan, Anglesey.

CO-OPTATED MEMBERS.

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CHAPMAN, Miss F. M., Donhead House, Salisbury.
CLIFFORD, Miss M., Redland Green, Bristol.
HIBBERT, Sir J. T., K.C.B., Hampfield, Grange-over-Sands.
MANTON, H. J., Esq., Westfield Road, Birmingham.
STACEY, Miss AGATHA, 30 Calthorpe Road, Birmingham.
STRUTT, Hon. F., Milford House, Derby.
VALLANCE, W., Esq., Vallance Road, Whitechapel, E.
VULLIAMY, A. F., Esq., 20 Upper Brook Street, Ipswich.
WARNER, Mrs, 5 Prince of Wales Terrace, Kensington, W.
WHITTAKER, JOHN, Esq., Woodlands, Nelson, Lancashire.

DISTRICT COMMITTEES.

1. Metropolitan and (2.) South-Eastern (combined), 128 Unions.

(*South-Eastern Conference first met, 1870. 98 Unions.*)

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Sir JOHN F. LENNARD, Bart., Wickham Court, Beckenham, } *Vice-*
JAMES BROWN, Esq., 43 Lexham Gardens, S.W., } *Presidents.*

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Rev. C. E. FEW, Sevenoaks, Kent.

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Miss BRODIE HALL, Eastbourne.

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W. BROWN, Esq., Lee.

W. VALLANCE, Esq., Vallance Road, Whitechapel.

Co-optated Members.

COWIE, Miss, St Gabriel's House, London Docks, E.
FLETCHER, Sir HENRY, Bart., M.P., Ham Manor, Angmering,
Sussex.
HAMILTON, General Sir W. S., Bart., Woodgate, Horsham.
MCKEE, Miss, 2 Newman Mansions, Newman Street, W.
NICHOLSON, C. N., Esq., 35 Harrington Gardens, S.W.

3. South Midland. 64 Unions (First met, 1876).

President.

A. J. PELL, Esq., Wilburton Manor, Ely, *Hon. Secretary.*

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Buckingham JOHN TREADWELL, Esq., Upper Winchendon, Ayles-
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Middlesex Rev. A. D. HILTON, Uxbridge Moor Vicarage, Ux-
bridge.
Northampton Rev. Canon BURY, Harleston, Northampton.
Oxford W. H. ASHURST, Esq., Waterstock, Oxford.

4. Eastern. 56 Unions (First met, 1872).

A. F. VULLIAMY, Esq., 20 Upper Brook Street, Ipswich, *Hon. Secretary.*
The Committee consists of one Delegate from each Union.

5. South-Western. 79 Unions (First met, 1872).

Lord EDMOND FITZMAURICE, *President.*

Miss F. M. CHAPMAN, Donhead Hall, Salisbury, *Hon. Secretary.*

Committee.

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Somerset T. H. M. BAILWARD, Esq., Horsington Manor,
Templecombe.
Wilts FULLER, Mrs, Neston Park, Corsham.

6. West Midland. 82 Unions (First met, 1868).

GRANVILLE E. LLOYD-BAKER, Esq., Hardwicke Court, Gloucester,
Hon. Secretary.

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Hereford Rev. G. DAVENPORT, Foxley, Hereford.
Salop Rev. A. KINGSFORD, Atcham, Shrewsbury.
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Warwick T. G. PEGG, Esq., Styvechal, Coventry.
Birmingham W. BOWEN, Esq., Birmingham.
Bristol Major RUMSEY, Bristol.

7. North Midland. 45 Unions (First met, 1875).

DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE, K.G., *President*.
Hon. F. STRUTT, Milford House, Derby, *Hon. Secretary*.

Committee.

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J. T. GEE, Esq., The Ashes, Hayfield, Stockport.
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Leicestershire.....A. ANDREW, Esq., Leicester.
Rev. C. E. DANBY, Market Harborough.
D. G. HOLLAND, Esq., Leicester.
J. NORTH, Esq., Leicester.
Lincolnshire.....EDWIN PRATT, Esq., Clarence House, Lincoln.
Notts W. H. MASON, Esq., Moreton Hall, Retford.

8. North-Western. 42 Unions (First met, 1875).

Right Hon. Sir J. T. HIBBERT, K.C.B., Grange-over-Sands, Carnforth, *President*.

H. J. HAGGER, Esq., Vestry Hall, Liverpool, *Hon. Secretary*.

(There is no Committee, but a preliminary Conference is held each year to settle all the arrangements for the Conference.)

9. Yorkshire. 61 Unions (First met, 1876).

Sir F. S. POWELL, Bart., M.P., *President*.

A. T. LONGBOTHAM, Esq., 4 Carlton Street, Halifax, *Hon. Secretary*.

The Committee consists of the Chairmen and Clerks of the following Unions:—Bradford, Dewsbury, Halifax, Huddersfield, Kingston-upon-Hull, Leeds, North Bierley, Sheffield, Wakefield, and York.

10. Northern. 39 Unions (First met, 1872).

JAMES CROPPER, Esq., Ellergreen, Kendal, *President*.

C. B. P. BOSANQUET, Esq., Rock Hall, Alnwick, *Hon. Secretary*.

J. W. GIBSON, Esq., Guardians' Offices, Newcastle, *Treasurer*.

Committee.

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Rev. Canon A. F. CURWEN, Harrington Rectory.
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C. B. P. BOSANQUET, Esq., Rock Hall, Alnwick.
Alderman SPENCE, Chirton Cottage, North Shields.
Rev. J. WALKER, Whalton Rectory, Newcastle.
Westmorland.....CROPPER, Hon. Mrs, Tolson Hall, Kendal.
JAMES CROPPER, Esq., Ellergreen, Kendal.
WILSON, Mrs LLOYD, Westworth, Cockermouth.

11. South Wales. 33 Unions (First met, 1873).

E. POWELL, Esq., Water Street, Neath, *Hon. Secretary*.

12. North Wales. 19 Unions (First met, 1877).

P. HARDING ROBERTS, Esq., Holywell, *Hon. Secretary*.

The Committee consists of the Chairmen of all Boards of Guardians in the District.

